

TEN MODERN STORIES

Collected and Edited by
JOHN HAMPDEN, M.A.

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PREFACE

THE number of bad short stories which are published to-day is greater than ever before, thanks to the popular magazines with their insatiable appetite for machine-made fiction, but the number of good stories is greater too. Perhaps there is something like a fixed ratio of production between good and bad, in literature and the arts. At least it is certain that the short story, like the one-act play, has come into its own during the past fifty years, and now has a range and richness and variety unknown in our literature before the end of the Victorian period. It has indeed far too wide a range, in both subject and treatment, to be represented by ten stories chosen primarily for older boys and girls; but the editor hopes that these ten do indicate its variety and its extraordinary interest, and as most of them have been written since the advent of Tchegov and Katherine Mansfield, they show how some writers are finding new possibilities in the short story while others continue to follow traditional methods.

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To Mr. Allison and Messrs. Hurst and Blackett for "Mr. Franklyn's Adventure," from *It Never Rains*; to Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Messrs. Cassell and Co. for "The Song of the Flying Fish," from *The Secret of Father Brown*; to Mrs. Mitchison and Messrs. Jonathan Cape for "The Highbrow," from *Black Sparta*; to Mr. Coppard and Messrs. Jonathan Cape

Preface

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J. H.

TEN MODERN STORIES

MR. FRANKLYN'S ADVENTURE

JAMES MURRAY ALLISON

" I PERSONALLY have been through an experience so odd, so unusual, and so extraordinary that I find it difficult to make my friends believe it."

Half a dozen men were smoking and talking late at night in the card-room of a great liner. There was a retired admiral who told wonderful tales of the sea, a poet known to two continents, a Cambridge don, a " Black and Tan " on leave from Ireland, myself, and Mr. Franklyn. Mr. Franklyn had been a listener during the evening, and his contribution came about midnight. He was a little man, with a shiny bald head. He spoke very slowly and very deliberately, and emphasized his points by wagging his forefinger. He told me afterwards that he was second accountant to a firm of grain merchants in Cardiff.

He started his tale with the sentence I have quoted above, and went on : " It happened in 1916—during the War, you know. It was either late in June or early in July—I've forgotten the actual date. It may have been in June, or, as I say, in July : I am not sure. It doesn't matter

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very much really, but I fix the time there or thereabouts because I had occasion to come to London on business, very delicate and intricate business, the details of which I will not trouble you with to-night.

"I was staying at the Strand Palace Hotel, where, believe me, gentlemen, they do you very handsomely. You get a bedroom, quite nicely furnished. There was a picture, I remember, of Marcus Stone's on the wall of the bedroom. I've forgotten the title of the picture, but I can even now see the composition. There was a rustic seat on the left, and on the seat there was a young lady—quite young, about twenty or nineteen, or perhaps twenty-one. She was sitting on the seat—the rustic seat—dressed in some light material—muslin, or something that looked like muslin—reading a letter, obviously a love letter, because on the right of the picture, peeping round a big tree—an elm, I think, or an oak, I've forgotten which—there was a youngish man. He had top boots on—Wellingtons, you know—and he was looking in her direction, probably at her. Anyway, it was plain that the letter that she was reading was from him. Well, you get a bedroom and breakfast—an egg, or a bit of fish, or a rasher of bacon, a cup of tea, or coffee—though I may say that I do not believe in drinking coffee for breakfast. I mean I wouldn't have it stopped—coffee-drinking, I mean—but I do hold that coffee is a drink that should come after lunch, or after dinner, but never, never at breakfast. However, that is my own private view about it. I would not force it upon other people.

"They bring the breakfast up on a tray—not

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a wooden tray. It is of metal of some description, probably iron, though I'm inclined to think it was tin. They have painted flowers on them, not at all badly painted flowers; as a matter of fact, quite nicely painted. I should say they were daisies or pansies or even roses, sometimes a combination of all three, though I have seen——

"Anyway, you get the room—the bedroom with the picture—and the breakfast and a bathroom in the same corridor as the bedroom for six shillings. You did then; it may be a little higher now, but in those days it was six shillings. I can vouch for that, because I stayed there for three days, and my bill was eighteen shillings exactly. You may quote me as to that."

At this point the retired admiral, who had been glaring at Franklyn, said: "And then, sir——"

"Now," said Franklyn, "I'm coming to the real story. A friend of mine from Leeds, who, I don't mind telling you, is the chief letter-sorter at one of the Leeds post-offices, asked me to lunch at the Victoria Hotel in Northumberland Avenue. It was either the 'Victoria' or the 'Metropole' or the 'Grand.' It was ~~one~~ of the three, I'm not quite sure which, because the experience of the day was so strange that I cannot now recollect what hotel it was that we actually did have luncheon at on that day. But this I do know, for reasons which I shall presently state, it was in Northumberland Avenue. Call it the 'Victoria,' or if you like the 'Grand,' or even the 'Metropole,' though on the whole I rather think we had better call it the 'Victoria'—but really it doesn't matter very much so far as this story is concerned.

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“ Well, I got the letter—the letter from my Leeds friend—inviting me to lunch. There was nothing very remarkable about the letter. It ran something like this :

“ ‘ MY DEAR FRANKLYN,

“ ‘ I shall be in London on Tuesday next, and, as I hear that you will be in Town on that day, I should like you to have lunch with me at the blank hotel at 1.15.’

“ I was delighted to accept my friend’s invitation, and I wrote him to that effect—a postcard I think it was, but no matter I will not weary you with the details of how I spent the morning ; that has nothing to do with this story, but at 12.45 I came into the Strand Palace Hotel for a wash and a brush-up. I remember going up to my bedroom and ringing for a maid, who very kindly brought me a jug of hot water, and I remember looking round the room—a sort of final look round, you know—and just as I was leaving I noticed on the mantelpiece a red pencil. It was either a two-H or a three-H, I am not now certain. But of this I am certain : it was an H—not a B. And I’ll tell you why I’m certain. The B pencils are much blacker and very much softer than the H’s. The H is a hard pencil—you know, metallic. Accountants use H’s ; artists use B’s. A cousin of mine is an artist, and he uses B’s, *always*. But I use H’s—not one-H’s, but two or even three-H’s. The more H’s the harder. And another thing, the H’s don’t smudge like B’s do. You can’t have ledgers all smudged up, you know. So that’s why accountants use H’s.

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"Did I tell you that the pencil was red? That is important. It was red. A kind of scarlet—very red. You must get that firmly fixed in your mind; otherwise you will miss the whole point of the story. The pencil was red. By the way, the pencil wasn't round. It had sides to it—six or eight. I've forgotten the number, but probably six. Incidentally, I can't understand people who go about using round pencils, especially accountants. I like 'em with sides on 'em, and this pencil had sides. I don't think it was a Koh-i-noor, nor a Venus; it might have been a Hardtmuth, I cannot now recall. It had 'Graphite' on it in gold letters—capital letters. I'm sure of that, because I remember saying to myself: 'Graphite'—it sounded to me like 'Dynamite'—you know, the stuff that explodes—dynamite.

"Anyway, the pencil was on the mantelpiece, and I put it into my top waistcoat pocket, and for this reason. I always make notes, always. You never know, you know; so I personally always make notes. I make notes in notebooks or on old envelopes. I often cut the sides of envelopes and spread them out to make notes on, though I will say this, it is very awkward to make long notes on the insides of envelopes, because of the gummed parts. The pencil always slips up along the edge, and sometimes the notes are difficult to read. On this occasion, however, it didn't matter; I didn't make any notes at all; and for this reason—I lost the pencil!

"That is exactly what happened. I lost the pencil. I remember distinctly putting the pencil into my top right-hand waistcoat pocket; I remember it distinctly—there is no question or

doubt about that. When I left the Strand Palace Hotel the red pencil, two or three H's, not round, but with sides to it, with 'Graphite' in gold letters, capital letters, stamped upon its end, was in my top right-hand waistcoat pocket. There is, I think, no necessity for me to stress this point, because you will shortly discover from what followed that it must have been there, unless we live in an age of miracles. The theory has been advanced, by the way, that what happened on that day *was* actually a miracle. My friend from Leeds—the letter-sorter—is convinced that it was a miracle, but the evidence is such that barring my forgetfulness in the matter of the actual name of the pencil and the number of H's, there can be nothing miraculous about what followed. I should not describe the thing as a coincidence—that would scarcely do. I simply call it odd, unusual, out of the way, if you like, but not miraculous.

"The facts are plain. I put the pencil into my top right-hand waistcoat pocket before leaving the Strand Palace Hotel to go to lunch with a friend—the letter-sorter from Leeds—at the 'Victoria'—call it the 'Victoria'; it is no use going into all that again,—Hotel in Northumberland Avenue. It was just about one. The clock at the Law Courts, near the church that Claude Duval hid at after his affair with Nell Gwynne at Simpson's, was under repair, so I can't guarantee the exact time; but it was one, or about one—not very much later, because I turned up at the hotel at about five-past one, and waited for my friend in the vestibule. I didn't know then that I'd lost the pencil—I found out later."

Franklyn was now very solemnly wagging a

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forefinger and tapping the edge of the table to emphasize his points.

"Presently, at a quarter-past one, in came my friend from Leeds. We went into the dining-room, and sat down at a small table. Now I don't mind saying that I'm very fond of radishes, and I may say that I made a fairly handsome onslaught on a selection of that dish that the waiter—a dark-looking fellow, probably an Italian, although you never know, he might have been French or Spanish—placed before us. I always eat them with mustard; I am aware that many people prefer pepper and salt, but I like mustard—with radishes I mean. And I'll tell you another thing that I like with mustard—mutton.

"Well, my friend, who, by the way, is a very witty man, didn't take any of the sardines, shredded tomatoes, potato salad, pickled cabbage, or, indeed, any of the *hors d'œuvres*. He had ordered fish, I think turbot, but I am not sure; it might have been salmon, but I don't think it was. But whatever it was, it became evident from his manner that he was becoming a little impatient.

"He leant across the table and said to me: 'Fairbairn'—that's my Christian name—'Fairbairn,' he said—he was obviously hungry—'Fairbairn,' he said, '*when they say "treacle" I shall say "lick."*'

"I burst out laughing, burst out laughing—I remember the tears rolling down my cheeks. Then I said: 'That's good, very good,' and I remember saying distinctly: 'I must make a note of that.' That is what I said. I said I would make a note of it. I felt for my pencil—the pencil that I've already described to you, the red pencil, the pencil

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that should have been in my top right-hand waist-coat pocket. It was gone ! Believe me, or believe me not, gentlemen, the pencil was not there. It had disappeared ! It was gone—lost ! I'd lost the pencil ! There can be no doubt about the pencil being in my pocket when I left the Strand Palace Hotel. That I shall shortly prove. There is no question about that. The pencil was in my pocket at one o'clock or thereabouts, but at one-twenty the pencil was not in my pocket. There is no room for discussion on that. The pencil was, shall I say ?—'*non est.*'

“ Now, here comes the strange part of my story. We chatted over lunch. I've forgotten what we talked about. In the circumstances it is not to be wondered at. I must confess that the loss of the pencil had upset me, though I hope that my friend didn't notice it. But it had. I admit it was a trifling matter, but it was odd. I repeat again that there is no confusion about the pencil being in my pocket—none whatever—it certainly was odd. The whole thing is clear *now*, as you will admit that presently, but then it was not so ; quite the contrary. Then, it was difficult, impossible, to explain. However, we got through lunch somehow, and I hope that there was not in my manner any hint of the loss I had sustained. I think I may say that I kept my end up. It was not till afterwards that I told my friend from Leeds about the loss of the pencil. I wrote to him the next day. I shall never forget his answer. It was a long letter. My friend is a fancier of Pouter Pigeons. As a matter of fact, his Blue Metal Rocky ' Gertrude ' took the first prize three years running at the Leeds Poultry Show, though

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why people show pigeons among fowls— Well, he wrote me at some length about Pouters, and referred to my letter to him—the one I sent him about the loss and recovery of the pencil—and I shall never forget what he said about it. He said : ‘ My dear Fairbairn, the recovery of the pencil is little short of a miracle.’ That is what he said. I’ve got the letter at home in Cardiff, and any time you like, you can come and see it. Read it—read it for yourselves. I live about a mile and a half from the Cardiff Town Hall, one of the handsomest buildings in the West of England. You get the tram at the corner of High Street, where the tobacconist’s shop is. You get the tram—you can’t make a mistake ; there’s a wooden Indian outside the shop—you get the tram there, and in about twenty minutes you are at ‘ The Eagle’s Nest.’ That’s the name of my house, ‘ The Eagle’s Nest.’ I’ve got the letter in a filing cabinet just outside the living-room in the hall. It is stained oak—the cabinet, I mean. And that is what he says in the letter. ‘ My dear Fairbairn ’—my Christian name—he says, ‘ The recovery of the pencil is little short of a miracle.’ That is what he said.”

By this time the audience had been reduced to pulp. It was the poet who helped us out. He said politely : “ How did you eventually discover the missing pencil ? ”

“ That,” said Mr. Franklyn, “ is the *whole* point of my story. I left my friend from Leeds, whose letter in response to mine I still possess, as I’ve told you, and any time you may—but I’ll not go over that again—I left him at the end of North-umberland Avenue ; not the end near the National

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Liberal Club ; the other end, where that fellow is—now what is his name ? Everybody knows it. God bless my soul, I'll forget my own name one of these days ! What *is* that fellow's name ? ”

“ Do you mean Phillips, the nautical instrument maker ? ” said the admiral.

“ No, no,” said Franklyn. “ He's much more important. It's—it's——”

“ I know,” said the poet, “ it's Jameson's, the bookshop.”

“ Don't be a damn' fool,” said Franklyn. “ The man I mean is in Trafalgar Square—actually in the Square. Everybody knows him.”

“ I know,” said I. “ Hepple, the chemist.”

Franklyn got quite angry. “ No, not Hepple. He doesn't keep a shop, the man I mean. He's up on a pedestal, a column. Now, what *is* his name ? ”

Said the admiral, faintly : “ You don't refer to Nelson ? ”

“ Yes,” said Franklyn. “ That's the chap ! That's the end of Northumberland Avenue, where he is, that I parted from my friend from Leeds. The nature of our parting is not important. I left him on the corner and walked back to the Strand Palace Hotel. I walked upon the left-hand side of the Strand, past the Post Office, past Horne Brothers' shop, past the A.B.C., past Lyons's, past Dunn, the hatter, where the medical statues are, though I cannot see why the *Daily Express* made such a fuss about them, and past the Adelphi Theatre. There was a play on. I cannot remember now what it was, but it is of no importance. Now, here's the point.

“ When I got to 'Romano's'—a restaurant

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facing the Cecil Hotel—I happened to glance quite casually into the gutter, and I noticed a gleam of red—in the gutter. I paused. I, as a matter of fact, stopped. I looked; I stooped down, and what do you think, gentlemen, I discovered lying in the gutter outside Romano's Restaurant? My pencil! My red pencil—the very pencil that I have been telling you about! There it was; lying in the gutter outside Romano's Restaurant—in the gutter. My pencil; there it was. It must have slipped from my pocket when passing an hour or two previously. As I say, it must have slipped from my pocket.

"I have often thought about it, about the whole thing. I can find no other explanation. The pencil, my red pencil, that I took from the mantelpiece in my bedroom at the Strand Palace Hotel just before I left to take lunch with my friend from Leeds, and with which, you will remember, I meant to take notes; the H pencil (two or three H's), with six or eight sides to it, and stamped with the word 'Graphite' in gold letters. (You will remember that it reminded me of the word 'dynamite'—an explosive.) The pencil had obviously fallen from my pocket and rolled out into the gutter—rolled into the gutter, from my pocket, when I was walking from the Strand Palace Hotel to take lunch with my friend. I shall never forget it.

"There is only one explanation: the pencil must have fallen from my pocket. Just that. I must have dropped it. There cannot be any other explanation."

There was a long silence. The admiral was looking at Mr. Franklyn with a very peculiar

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expression upon his face. He was, I think, making up his mind to say something. What it was I do not know, because Franklyn said with an air of finality: "Well, gentlemen, that's my story. I tell you the facts, I add nothing, I subtract nothing. I have elaborated no incident of that day's adventure. I've told you the thing exactly as it happened to me. What do you think of it?"

Nobody told him.

THE SONG OF THE FLYING FISH

G. K. CHESTERTON

THE soul of Mr. Peregrine Smart hovered like a fly round one possession and one joke. It might be considered a mild joke, for it consisted merely of asking people if they had seen his goldfish. It might also be considered an expensive joke ; but it is doubtful whether he was not secretly more attached to the joke than to the evidence of expenditure. In talking to his neighbours in the little group of new houses that had grown up round the old village green, he lost no time in turning the conversation in the direction of his hobby. To Dr. Burdock, a rising biologist with a resolute chin and hair brushed back like a German's, Mr. Smart made the easy transition. " You are interested in natural history ; have you seen my goldfish ? " To so orthodox an evolutionist as Dr. Burdock doubtless all nature was one ; but at first sight the link was not close, as he was a specialist who had concentrated entirely upon the primitive ancestry of the giraffe. To Father Brown, from a church in the neighbouring provincial town, he traced a rapid train of thought which touched on the topics of " Rome—St. Peter—fishermen—fish—goldfish." In talking to Mr. Imlack Smith, the bank manager, a slim and

sallow gentleman of dressy appearance but quiet demeanour, he violently wrenched the conversation to the subject of the gold standard, from which it was merely a step to goldfish. In talking to that brilliant Oriental traveller and scholar, Count Yvon de Lara (whose title was French and his face rather Russian, not to say Tartar), the versatile conversationalist showed an intense and intelligent interest in the Ganges and the Indian Ocean, leading naturally to the possible presence of goldfish in those waters. From Mr. Harry Hartopp, the very rich but very shy and silent young gentleman who had recently come down from London, he had at last extorted the information that the embarrassed youth in question was *not* interested in fishing, and had then added: "Talking about fishing, have you seen my goldfish?"

The peculiar thing about the goldfish was that they were made of gold. They were part of an eccentric but expensive toy, said to have been made by the freak of some rich Eastern prince, and Mr. Smart had picked it up at some sale or in some curiosity shop, such as he frequented for the purpose of lumbering up his house with unique and useless things. From the other end of the room it looked like a rather unusually large bowl containing rather unusually large living fish; a closer inspection showed it to be a huge bubble of beautifully blown Venetian glass, very thin and delicately clouded with faintly iridescent colour, in the tinted twilight of which hung grotesque golden fishes with great rubies for eyes. The whole thing was undoubtedly worth a great deal in solid material; how much more would

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depend upon the waves of lunacy passing over the world of collectors. Mr. Smart's new secretary, a young man named Francis Boyle, though an Irishman and not credited with caution, was mildly surprised at his talking so freely of the gems of his collection to the group of comparative strangers who happened to have alighted in a rather nomadic fashion in the neighbourhood; for collectors are commonly vigilant and sometimes secretive. In the course of settling down to his new duties, Mr. Boyle found he was not alone in this sentiment, and that in others it passed from a mild wonder to a grave disapproval.

"It's a wonder his throat isn't cut," said Mr. Smart's valet, Harris, not without a hypothetical relish, almost as if he had said, in a purely artistic sense, "It's a pity."

"It's extraordinary how he leaves things about," said Mr. Smart's head clerk, Jameson, who had come up from the office to assist the new secretary, "and he won't even put up those ramshackle old bars across his ramshackle old door."

"It's all very well with Father Brown and the doctor," said Mr. Smart's housekeeper, with a certain vigorous vagueness that marked her opinions, "but when it comes to foreigners, I call it tempting Providence. It isn't only the count, either; that man at the bank looks to me much too yellow to be English."

"Well, that young Hartopp is English enough," said Boyle good-humouredly, "to the extent of not having a word to say for himself."

"He thinks the more," said the housekeeper. "He may not be exactly a foreigner, but he is

not such a fool as he looks. Foreign is as foreign does, I say," she added darkly.

Her disapproval would probably have deepened if she had heard the conversation in her master's drawing-room that afternoon, a conversation of which the goldfish were the text, though the offensive foreigner tended more and more to be the central figure. It was not that he spoke so very much ; but even his silences had something positive about them. He looked the more massive for sitting in a sort of heap on a heap of cushions, and in the deepening twilight his wide Mongolian face seemed faintly luminous, like a moon. Perhaps his background brought out something atmospherically Asiatic about his face and figure, for the room was a chaos of more or less costly curiosities, amid which could be seen the crooked curves and burning colours of countless Eastern weapons, Eastern pipes and vessels, Eastern musical instruments and illuminated manuscripts. Anyhow, as the conversation proceeded, Boyle felt more and more that the figure seated on the cushions and dark against the twilight had the exact outline of a huge image of Buddha.

The conversation was general enough, for all the little local group were present. They were, indeed, often in the habit of dropping in at each other's houses, and by this time constituted a sort of club, of people coming from the four or five houses standing round the green. Of these houses Peregrine Smart's was the oldest, largest, and most picturesque ; it straggled down almost the whole of one side of the square, leaving only room for a small villa, inhabited by a retired colonel named Varney, who was reported to be an invalid, and

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certainly was never seen to go abroad. At right angles to these stood two or three shops that served the simpler needs of the hamlet, and at the corner the inn of the Blue Dragon, at which Mr. Hartopp, the stranger from London, was staying. On the opposite side were three houses, one rented by the Count de Lara, one by Dr. Burdock, and the third still standing empty. On the fourth side was the bank, with an adjoining house for the bank manager, and a line of fence enclosing some land that was let for building. It was thus a very self-contained group, and the comparative emptiness of the open ground for miles round it threw the members more and more on each other's society. That afternoon one stranger had indeed broken into the magic circle; a hatchet-faced fellow with fierce tufts of eyebrow and moustache, and so shabbily dressed that he must have been a millionaire or a duke if he had really (as was alleged) come down to do business with the old collector. But he was known, at the Blue Dragon at least, as Mr. Harmer.

To him had been recounted anew the glories of the gilded fish and the criticisms regarding their custody.

"People are always telling me I ought to lock them up more carefully," observed Mr. Smart, cocking an eyebrow over his shoulder at the dependant who stood there holding some papers from the office. Smart was a round-faced, round-bodied little old man, rather like a bald parrot. "Jameson and Harris and the rest are always at me to bar the doors as if it were a mediæval fortress, though really these rotten old rusty bars are too mediæval to keep anybody out, I should

think. I prefer to trust to luck and the local police."

"It is not always the best bars that keep people out," said the count. "It all depends on who's trying to get in. There was an ancient Hindu hermit who lived naked in a cave and passed through the three armies that encircled the Mogul and took the great ruby out of the tyrant's turban, and went back unscathed like a shadow. For he wished to teach the great how small are the laws of space and time."

"When we really study the small laws of space and time," said Dr. Burdock dryly, "we generally find out how those tricks are done. Western science has let in daylight on a good deal of Eastern magic. Doubtless a great deal can be done with hypnotism and suggestion, to say nothing of sleight-of-hand."

"The ruby was not in the royal tent," observed the count in his dreamy fashion, "but he found it among a hundred tents"

"Can't all that be explained by telepathy?" asked the doctor sharply.

The question sounded the sharper because it was followed by a heavy silence, almost as if the distinguished Oriental traveller had, with imperfect politeness, gone to sleep.

"I beg your pardon," he said, rousing himself with a sudden smile. "I had forgotten we were talking with words. In the East we talk with thoughts, and so we never misunderstand each other. It is strange how you people worship words and are satisfied with words. What difference does it make to a thing that you now call it telepathy, as you once called it tomfoolery? If

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a man climbs into the sky on a mango tree, how is it altered by saying it is only levitation, instead of saying it is only lies. If a mediæval witch waved a wand and turned me into a blue baboon, you would say it was only atavism."

The doctor looked for a moment as if he might say that it would not be so great a change after all. But before his irritation could find that or any other vent, the man called Harmer interrupted gruffly :

"It's true enough those Indian conjurers can do queer things, but I notice they generally do them in India. Confederates, perhaps, or merely mass psychology. I don't think those tricks have ever been played in an English village, and I should say our friend's goldfish were quite safe."

"I will tell you a story," said de Lara, in his motionless way, "which happened not in India, but outside an English barrack in the most modernized part of Cairo. A sentinel was standing inside the grating of an iron gateway looking out between the bars on to the street. There appeared outside the gate a beggar barefoot and in native rags, who asked him, in English that was startlingly distinct and refined, for a certain official document kept in the building for safety. The soldier told the man, of course, that he could not come inside ; and the man answered, smiling : 'What is inside and what is outside ?' The soldier was still staring scornfully through the iron grating when he gradually realized that, though neither he nor the gate had moved, he was actually standing in the street and looking in at the barrack yard, where the beggar stood still and smiling and equally motionless. Then, when

the beggar turned towards the building the sentry awoke to such sense as he had left, and shouted a warning to all the soldiers within the gated enclosure to hold the prisoner fast. 'You won't get out of there anyhow,' he said vindictively. Then the beggar said in his silvery voice: 'What is outside and what is inside?' And the soldier, still glaring through the same bars, saw that they were once more between him and the street, where the beggar stood free and smiling with a paper in his hand."

Mr. Imlack Smith, the bank manager, was looking at the carpet with his dark sleek head bowed, and he spoke for the first time.

"Did anything happen about the paper?" he asked.

"Your professional instincts are correct, sir," said the count, with grim affability. "It was a paper of considerable financial importance. Its consequences were international."

"I hope they don't occur often," said young Hartopp gloomily.

"I do not touch the political side," said the count serenely, "but only the philosophical. It illustrates how the wise man can get behind time and space and turn the levers of them, so to speak, so that the whole world turns round before our eyes. But it is so hard for you people to believe that spiritual powers are really more powerful than material ones."

"Well," said old Smart cheerfully, "I don't profess to be an authority on spiritual powers. What do you say, Father Brown?"

"The only thing that strikes me," answered the little priest, "is that all the supernatural acts

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we have yet heard of seem to be thefts. And stealing by spiritual methods seems to me much the same as stealing by material ones."

"Father Brown is a Philistine," said the smiling Smith.

"I have a sympathy with the tribe," said Father Brown. "A Philistine is only a man who is right without knowing why."

"All this is too clever for me," said Hartopp heartily.

"Perhaps," said Father Brown, with a smile, "you would like to speak without words, as the count suggests. He would begin by saying nothing in a pointed fashion, and you would retort with a burst of taciturnity."

"Something might be done with music," murmured the Count dreamily. "It would be better than all these words."

"Yes, I might understand that better," said the young man in a low voice.

Boyle had followed the conversation with curious attention, for there was something in the demeanour of more than one of the talkers that seemed to him significant or even odd. As the talk drifted to music, with an appeal to the dapper bank manager (who was an amateur musician of some merit), the young secretary awoke with a start to his secretarial duties, and reminded his employer that the head clerk was still standing patiently with the papers in his hand.

"Oh, never mind about those just now, Jameson," said Smart rather hurriedly. "Only something about my account; I'll see Mr. Smith about it later. You were saying that the 'cello, Mr. Smith——"

But the cold breath of business had sufficed to disperse the fumes of transcendental talk, and the guests began one after another to say farewell. Only Mr. Imlack Smith, bank manager and musician, remained to the last ; and when the rest were gone he and his host went into the inner room where the goldfish were kept, and closed the door.

The house was long and narrow, with a covered balcony running along the first floor, which consisted mostly of a sort of suite of rooms used by the householder himself, his bedroom and dressing-room, and an inner room in which his very valuable treasures were sometimes stored for the night instead of being left in the rooms below. This balcony, like the insufficiently barred door below it, was a matter of concern to the housekeeper and the head clerk and the others who lamented the carelessness of the collector ; but in truth that cunning old gentleman was more careful than he seemed. He professed no great belief in the antiquated fastenings of the old house, which the housekeeper lamented to see rusting in idleness, but he had an eye to the more important point of strategy. He always put his favourite goldfish in the room at the back of his bedroom for the night, and slept in front of it, as it were, with a pistol under his pillow. And when Boyle and Jameson, awaiting his return from the *tête-à-tête*, at length saw the door open and their employer reappear, he was carrying the great glass bowl as reverently as if it had been the relic of a saint.

Outside, the last edges of the sunset still clung to the corners of the green square ; but inside, a lamp had already been kindled ; and in the

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mingling of the two lights the coloured globe glowed like some monstrous jewel, and the fantastic outlines of the fiery fishes seemed to give it, indeed, something of the mystery of a talisman, like strange shapes seen by a seer in the crystal of doom. Over the old man's shoulder the olive face of Imlack Smith stared like a sphinx.

"I am going up to London to-night, Mr. Boyle," said old Smart, with more gravity than he commonly showed. "Mr. Smith and I are catching the six-forty-five. I should prefer you, Jameson, to sleep upstairs in my rooms to-night; if you put the bowl in the back room as usual, it will be quite safe then. Not that I suppose anything could possibly happen."

"Anything may happen anywhere," said the smiling Mr. Smith. "I think you generally take a gun to bed with you. Perhaps you had better leave it behind in this case."

Peregrine Smart did not reply, and they passed out of the house on to the road round the village green.

The secretary and the head clerk slept that night as directed in their employer's bedroom. To speak more strictly, Jameson, the head clerk, slept in a bed in the dressing-room, but the door stood open between, and the two rooms running along the front were practically one. Only the bedroom had a long French window giving on the balcony, and an entrance at the back into the inner apartment where the goldfish bowl had been placed for safety. Boyle dragged his bed right across so as to bar this entrance, put the revolver under his pillow, and then undressed and went to bed, feeling that he had taken all possible pre-

cautions against an impossible or improbable event. He did not see why there should be any particular danger of normal burglary ; and as for the spiritual burglary that figured in the traveller's tales of the Count de Lara, if his thoughts ran on them so near to sleep it was because they were such stuff as dreams are made of. They soon turned into dreams with intervals of dreamless slumber. The old clerk was a little more restless as usual ; but after fussing about a little longer, and repeating some of his favourite regrets and warnings, he also retired to his bed in the same manner and slept. The moon brightened and grew dim again above the green square and the grey blocks of houses in a solitude and silence that seemed to have no human witness ; and it was when the white cracks of daybreak had already appeared in the corners of the grey sky that the thing happened.

Boyle, being young, was naturally both the healthier and the heavier sleeper of the two. Though active enough when he was once awake, he always had a load to lift in waking. Moreover, he had dreams of the sort that cling to the emerging mind like the dim tentacles of an octopus. They were a medley of many things, including his last look from the balcony across the four grey roads and the green square. But the pattern of them changed and shifted and turned dizzily, to the accompaniment of a low grinding noise, which sounded somehow like a subterranean river, and may have been no more than old Mr. Jameson snoring in the dressing-room. But in the dreamer's mind all that murmur and motion was vaguely connected with the words of the Count de Lara,

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about a wisdom that could hold the levers of time and space and turn the world. In the dream it seemed as if a vast murmuring machinery under the world were really moving whole landscapes hither and thither, so that the ends of the earth might appear in a man's front-garden, or his own front-garden be exiled beyond the sea.

The first complete impressions he had were the words of a song, with a rather thin metallic accompaniment; they were sung in a foreign accent, and a voice that was still strange and yet faintly familiar. And yet he could hardly feel sure that he was not making up poetry in his sleep.

Over the land and over the sea
My flying fishes will come to me,
For the note is not of the world that wakes them,
But in——

He struggled to his feet and saw that his fellow-guardian was already out of bed; Jameson was peering out of the long window on to the balcony, and calling out sharply to some one in the street below.

"Who's that?" he called out sharply. "What do you want?"

He turned to Boyle in agitation, saying: "There's somebody prowling about just outside. I knew it wasn't safe. I'm going down to bar that front door, whatever they say."

He ran downstairs in a flutter, and Boyle could hear the clattering of the bars upon the front door; but Boyle himself stepped out upon the balcony and looked out on the long grey road that led up to the house, and he thought he was still dreaming.

Upon that grey road leading across that empty moor and through that little English hamlet, there had appeared a figure that might have stepped straight out of the jungle or the bazaar—a figure out of one of the Count's fantastic stories; a figure out of the *Arabian Nights*. The rather ghostly grey twilight which begins to define and yet to discolour everything when the light in the east has ceased to be localized, lifted slowly like a veil of grey gauze and showed him a figure wrapped in outlandish raiment. A scarf of a strange sea-blue, vast and voluminous, went round the head like a turban, and then again round the chin, giving rather the general character of a hood; so far as the face was concerned it had all the effect of a mask. For the raiment round the head was drawn close as a veil; and the head itself was bowed over a queer-looking musical instrument made of silver or steel, and shaped like a deformed or crooked violin. It was played with something like a silver comb, and the notes were curiously thin and keen. Before Boyle could open his mouth, the same haunting alien accent came from under the shadow of the bur-nous, singing words of the same sort :

As the golden birds go back to the tree
My golden fishes return to me.
Return——

"You've no right here," called out Boyle in exasperation, hardly knowing what he said.

"I have a right to the goldfish," said the stranger, speaking more like King Solomon than an unsandalled Bedouin in a ragged blue cloak. "And they will come to me. Come !"

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He struck his strange fiddle as his voice rose sharply on the word. There was a pang of sound that seemed to pierce the mind, and then there came a fainter sound, like an answer ; a vibrant whisper. It came from the dark room behind where the bowl of goldfish was standing.

Boyle turned towards it ; and even as he turned the echo in the inner room changed to a long tingling sound like an electric bell, and then to a faint crash. It was still a matter of seconds since he had challenged the man from the balcony ; but the old clerk had already regained the top of the stairs, panting a little, for he was an elderly gentleman.

" I've locked up the door, anyhow," he said.

" The stable door," said Boyle out of the darkness of the inner room.

Jameson followed him into that apartment and found him staring down at the floor, which was covered with a litter of coloured glass like the curved bits of a broken rainbow.

" What do you mean by the stable door ? " began Jameson.

" I mean that the steed is stolen," answered Boyle. " The flying steeds. The flying fishes our Arab friend outside has just whistled to like so many performing puppies."

" But how could he ? " exploded the old clerk, as if such events were hardly respectable.

" Well, they're gone," said Boyle shortly. " The broken bowl is here, which would have taken a long time to open properly, but only a second to smash. But the fish are gone, God knows how, though I think our friend ought to be asked."

"We are wasting time," said the distracted Jameson. "We ought to be after him at once."

"Much better be telephoning the police at once," answered Boyle. "They ought to outstrip him in a flash with motors and telephones that go a good deal farther than we should ever get, running through the village in our nightgowns. But it may be there are things even police cars and wires won't outstrip."

While Jameson was talking to the police station through the telephone in an agitated voice, Boyle went out again on to the balcony and hastily scanned that grey landscape of daybreak. There was no trace of the man in the turban, and no other sign of life, except some faint stirrings an expert might have recognized in the hotel of the Blue Dragon. Only Boyle, for the first time, noted consciously something that he had all along been noting unconsciously. It was like a fact struggling in the submerged mind and demanding its own meaning. It was simply the fact that the grey landscape had never been entirely grey; there was one gold spot amid its stripes of colourless colour, a lamp lighted in one of the houses on the other side of the green. Something, perhaps irrational, told him that it had been burning through all the hours of the darkness and was only fading with the dawn. He counted the houses, and his calculation brought out a result which seemed to fit in with something, he knew not what. Anyhow, it was apparently the house of the Count Yvon de Lara.

Inspector Pinner had arrived with several policemen, and done several things of a rapid and resolute sort, being conscious that the very

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absurdity of the costly trinkets might give the case considerable prominence in the newspapers. He had examined everything, measured everything, taken down everybody's deposition, taken everybody's finger-prints, put everybody's back up, and found himself at the end left facing a fact which he could not believe. An Arab from the desert had walked up the public road and stopped in front of the house of Mr. Peregrine Smart, where a bowl of artificial goldfish was kept in an inner room ; he had then sung or recited a little poem, and the bowl had exploded like a bomb and the fishes vanished into thin air. Nor did it soothe the inspector to be told by a foreign count, in a soft, purring voice, that the bounds of experience were being enlarged.

Indeed, the attitude of each member of the little group was characteristic enough. Peregrine Smart himself had come back from London the next morning to hear the news of his loss. Naturally he admitted a shock ; but it was typical of something sporting and spirited in the little old gentleman, something that always made his small strutting figure look like a cock sparrow's, that he showed more vivacity in the search than depression at the loss. The man named Harmer, who had come to the village on purpose to buy the goldfish, might be excused for being a little testy on learning they were not there to be bought. But in truth his rather aggressive moustache and eyebrows seemed to bristle with something more definite than disappointment, and the eyes that darted over the company were bright with a vigilance that might well be suspicion. The sallow face of the bank manager, who had also returned

from London, though by a later train, seemed again and again to attract those shining and shifting eyes like a magnet. Of the two remaining figures of the original circle, Father Brown was generally silent when he was not spoken to, and the dazed Hartopp was often silent even when he was.

But the count was not a man to let anything pass that gave an apparent advantage to his views. He smiled at his rationalistic rival, the doctor, in the manner of one who knows how it is possible to be irritating by being ingratiating.

"You will admit, doctor," he said, "that at least some of the stories you thought so improbable look a little more realistic to-day than they did yesterday. When a man as ragged as those I described is able, by speaking a word, to dissolve a solid vessel inside the four walls of the house he stands outside, it might perhaps be called an example of what I said about spiritual powers and material barriers."

"And it might be called an example of what I said," said the doctor sharply, "about a little scientific knowledge being enough to show how the tricks are done."

"Do you really mean, doctor," asked Smart, in some excitement, "that you can throw any scientific light on this mystery?"

"I can throw light on what the count calls a mystery," said the doctor, "because it is not a mystery at all. That part of it is plain enough. A sound is only a wave of vibration, and certain vibrations can break glass, if the sound is of a certain kind and the glass of a certain kind. The man did not stand in the road and think, which

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the count tells us is the ideal method when Orientals want a little chat. He sang out what he wanted, quite loud, and struck a shrill note on an instrument. It is similar to many experiments by which glass of special composition has been cracked."

"Such as the experiment," said the count lightly, "by which several lumps of solid gold have suddenly ceased to exist."

"Here comes Inspector Pinner," said Boyle. "Between ourselves, I think he would regard the doctor's natural explanation as quite as much of a fairy tale as the count's preternatural one. A very sceptical intellect, Mr. Pinner's, especially about me. I rather think I am under suspicion."

"I think we are all under suspicion," said the count.

It was the presence of this suspicion in his own case that led Boyle to seek the personal advice of Father Brown. They were walking round the village green together, some hours later in the day, when the priest, who was frowning thoughtfully at the ground as he listened, suddenly stopped.

"Do you see that?" he asked. "Somebody's been washing the pavement here—just this little strip of pavement outside Colonel Varney's house. I wonder whether that was done yesterday."

Father Brown looked rather earnestly at the house, which was high and narrow, and carried rows of striped sun-blinds of gay but already faded colours. The chinks or crannies that gave glimpses of the interior looked all the darker; indeed, they looked almost black in contrast with the façade thus golden in the morning light.

"That is Colonel Varney's house, isn't it?" he asked. "He comes from the East, too, I fancy. What sort of man is he?"

"I've never even seen him," answered Boyle. "I don't think anybody's seen him, except Dr. Burdock, and I rather fancy the doctor doesn't see him more than he need."

"Well, I'm going to see him for a minute," said Father Brown.

The big front door opened and swallowed the small priest, and his friend stood staring at it in a dazed and irrational manner, as if wondering whether it would ever open again. It opened in a few minutes, and Father Brown emerged, still smiling, and continued his slow and pottering progress round the square of roads. Sometimes he seemed to have forgotten the matter in hand altogether, for he would make passing remarks on historical and social questions, or on the prospects of development in the district. He remarked on the soil used for the beginning of a new road by the bank; he looked across the old village green with a vague expression.

"Common land. I suppose people ought to feed their pigs and geese on it, if they had any pigs or geese; as it is, it seems to feed nothing but nettles and thistles. What a pity that what was supposed to be a sort of large meadow has been turned into a small and petty wilderness. That's Dr. Burdock's house opposite, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Boyle, almost jumping at this abrupt postscript.

"Very well," answered Father Brown, "then I think we'll go indoors again."

As they opened the front door of Smart's house

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and mounted the stairs, Boyle repeated to his companion many details of the drama enacted there at daybreak.

"I suppose you didn't doze off again?" asked Father Brown, "giving time for somebody to scale the balcony while Jameson ran down to secure the door."

"No," answered Boyle; "I am sure of that. I woke up to hear Jameson challenging the stranger from the balcony; then I heard him running downstairs and putting up the bars, and then in two strides I was on the balcony myself."

"Or could he have slipped in between you from another angle? Are there any other entrances besides the front entrance?"

"Apparently there are not," said Boyle gravely.

"I had better make sure, don't you think?" asked Father Brown apologetically, and scuttled softly downstairs again. Boyle remained in the front bedroom gazing rather doubtfully after him. After a comparatively brief interval the round and rather rustic visage appeared again at the head of the stairs, looking rather like a turnip ghost with a broad grin.

"No. I think that settles the matter of entrances," said the turnip ghost cheerfully. "And now, I think, having got everything in a tight box, so to speak, we can take stock of what we've got. It's rather a curious business."

"Do you think," asked Boyle, "that the count, or the colonel, or any of these Eastern travellers have anything to do with it? Do you think it is—preternatural?"

"I will grant you this," said the priest gravely, "if the count, or the colonel, or any of your

neighbours did dress up in Arab masquerade and creep up to this house in the dark—then it *was* preternatural.”

“What do you mean? Why?”

“Because the Arab left no footprints,” answered Father Brown. “The colonel on the one side and the banker on the other are the nearest of your neighbours. That loose red soil is between you and the bank, it would print off bare feet like a plaster cast and probably leave red marks everywhere. I braved the colonel’s curry-seasoned temper to verify the fact that the front pavement was washed yesterday and not to-day; it was wet enough to make wet footprints all along the road. Now, if the visitor were the count or the doctor in the houses opposite, he might possibly, of course, have come across the common. But he must have found it exceedingly uncomfortable with bare feet, for it is, as I remarked, one mass of thorns and thistles and stinging nettles. He would surely have pricked himself and probably left traces of it. Unless, as you say, he was a preternatural being.”

Boyle looked steadily at the grave and indecipherable face of his clerical friend.

“Do you mean that he was?” he asked, at length.

“There is one general truth to remember,” said Father Brown, after a pause. “A thing can sometimes be too close to be seen, as, for instance, a man cannot see himself. There was a man who had a fly in his eye when he looked through the telescope, and he discovered that there was a most incredible dragon in the moon. And I am told that if a man hears the exact reproduction of

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his own voice it sounds like the voice of a stranger. In the same way, if anything is right in the foreground of our life we hardly see it, and if we did we might think it quite odd. If the thing in the foreground got into the middle distance, we should probably think it had come from the remote distance. Just come outside the house again for a moment. I want to show you how it looks from another standpoint."

He had already risen, and as they descended the stairs he continued his remarks in a rather groping fashion as if he were thinking aloud.

"The count and the Asiatic atmosphere all come in, because, in a case like this, everything depends on the preparation of the mind. A man can reach a condition in which a brick, falling on his head, will seem to be a Babylonian brick carved with cuneiform, and dropped from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, so that he will never even look at the brick and see it is of one pattern with the bricks of his own house. So in your case——"

"What does this mean?" interrupted Boyle, staring and pointing at the entrance. "What in the name of wonder does it mean? The door is barred again."

He was staring at the front door by which they had entered but a little while before, and across which stood, once more, the great dark bands of rusty iron which had once, as he had said, locked the stable door too late. There was something darkly and dumbly ironic in those old fastenings closing behind them and imprisoning them as if of their own motion.

"Of those?" said Father Brown casually. "I

put up those bars myself, just now. Didn't you hear me ? ”

“ No,” answered Boyle, staring. “ I heard nothing.”

“ Well, I rather thought you wouldn't,” said the other equably. “ There's really no reason why anybody upstairs should hear those bars being put up. A sort of hook fits easily into a sort of hole. When you're quite close you hear a dull click ; but that's all. The only thing that makes any noise a man could hear upstairs is this.”

And he lifted the bar out of its socket and let it fall with a clang at the side of the door.

“ It does make a noise if you *unbar* the door,” said Father Brown gravely, “ even if you do it pretty carefully.”

“ You mean——”

“ I mean,” said Father Brown, “ that what you heard upstairs was Jameson opening the door and not shutting it. And now let's open the door ourselves and go outside.”

When they stood outside in the street, under the balcony, the little priest resumed his previous explanation as coolly as if it had been a chemical lecture.

“ I was saying that a man may be in the mood to look for something very distant, and not realize that it is something very close, something very close to himself, perhaps something very like himself. It was a strange and outlandish thing that you saw when you looked down at this road. I suppose it never occurred to you to consider what he saw when he looked up at that balcony ? ”

Boyle was staring at the balcony and did not answer, and the other added :

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"You thought it very wild and wonderful that an Arab should come through civilized England with bare feet. You did not remember that at the same moment you had bare feet yourself."

Boyle at last found words, and it was to repeat words already spoken.

"Jameson opened the door," he said mechanically.

"Yes," assented his friend. "Jameson opened the door and came out into the road in his night-clothes, just as you came out on the balcony. He caught up two things that you had seen a hundred times: the length of old blue curtain that he wrapped round his head, and the Oriental musical instrument you must have often seen in that heap of Oriental curiosities. The rest was atmosphere and acting, very fine acting, for he is a very fine artist in crime."

"Jameson!" exclaimed Boyle incredulously.

"He was such a dull old stick that I never even noticed him."

"Precisely," said the priest, "he was an artist. If he could act a wizard or a troubadour for six minutes, do you think he could not act a clerk for six weeks?"

"I am still not quite sure of his object," said Boyle.

"His object has been achieved," replied Father Brown, "or very nearly achieved. He had taken the goldfish already, of course, as he had twenty chances of doing. But if he had simply taken them, everybody would have realized that he had twenty chances of doing it. By creating a mysterious magician from the end of the earth, he set everybody's thoughts wandering far afield

to Arabia and India, so that you yourself can hardly believe that the whole thing was so near home. It was too close to you to be seen."

"If this is true," said Boyle, "it was an extraordinary risk to run, and he had to cut it very fine. It's true I never heard the man in the street say anything while Jameson was talking from the balcony, so I suppose that was all a fake. And I suppose it's true that there was time for him to get outside before I had fully woken up and got out on to the balcony."

"Every crime depends on somebody not waking up too soon," replied Father Brown; "and in every sense most of us wake up too late. I, for one, have woken up much too late. For I imagine he's bolted long ago, just before or just after they took his finger-prints."

"You woke up before anybody else, anyhow," said Boyle, "and I should never have woken up in that sense. Jameson was so correct and colourless that I forgot all about him."

"Beware of the man you forget," replied his friend; "he is the one man who has you entirely at a disadvantage. But I did not suspect him either, until you told me how you had heard him barring the door."

"Anyhow, we owe it all to you," said Boyle warmly.

"You owe it all to Mrs. Robinson," said Father Brown, with a smile.

"Mrs. Robinson?" questioned the wondering secretary. "You don't mean the housekeeper?"

"Beware of the woman you forget, and even more," answered the other. "This man was a very high-class criminal; he had been an excel-

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lent actor, and therefore he was a good psychologist. A man like the count never hears any voice but his own ; but this man could listen, when you had all forgotten he was there, and gather exactly the right materials for his romance, and know exactly the right note to strike to lead you all astray. But he made one bad mistake in the psychology of Mrs. Robinson the housekeeper."

"I don't understand," answered Boyle, "what she can have to do with it."

"Jameson did not expect the doors to be barred," said Father Brown. "He knew that a lot of men, especially careless men like you and your employer, could go on saying for days that something ought to be done, or might as well be done. But if you convey to a woman that something ought to be done, there is always a dreadful danger that she will suddenly do it."

THE Highbrow

NAOMI MITCHISON

THE curtains blew about just a little ; one of the roses in the bowl suddenly let fall all its petals, which danced across the room like tiny birds. Timanthes, the owner of the roses, was middle-aged and fat, and loved them ; in winter, even, he had his cushions stuffed with rose leaves, though they did no more than remind him, quite faintly, of what his garden would be like by May. He was a prosperous shipowner of Gela, with three sons and a pretty but obedient daughter, and in fact everything that any one could want. The Gods had been kind.

Another and another of the roses came to pieces, till there were pink and red petals shed untidily over the whole room. He called for a slave to clear them up : of course it was Xenaidēs that came—it always was. Probably because he didn't spend all his master's time playing dice and chattering to the maids like those other young rascals. But it made Timanthes uncomfortable, the way he crushed those poor rose leaves up in his hands. Yes, very. " Is there anything else I can do, sir ? "

" No, nothing—except—— "

" Yes ? "

" Except—God's Body, can't you stop looking so Athenian ? " The man put his hand nervously

up to his face : " I can't help it. And—and— ' Shut is my City's gate, All men are equal and nothing, when the Gods hate.' " Timanthes brought his fist down with a thump on the couch : " Name of the Dog, there you go again ! Can't you ever get done with your dirty poets ? There, get away, get away, I've no fault to find with your work ! " Oof. He blew his cheeks out : Xenaides was gone away. But he hated losing his temper, it upset his digestion, and since that man had been in the house he had lost it several times, he was getting—yes, distinctly—thinner.

The roses blew about again : oh, let them, let them ! To-morrow he'd have jasmin—or lilies—or something that stayed still anyhow ! His eldest son, Euphron, came in : " What's the matter, father ? Some one been worrying you ? "

Timanthes looked up, prepared to be annoyed over anything : " Your beard," he said. " Disgusting ! Grow it or don't grow it, but at least don't come into my room looking like a hedgehog ! "

Euphron gave a comfortable laugh : " My nice new Gylippos fringe ! Really, father, you must try and remember the fashions ! "

" Oh, you've been insufferable since you came back from Syracuse, you and your Spartan ways ! " But all the same Timanthes began to laugh himself : " Tell me, hedgehog, why didn't you learn how to deal with Athenians ? "

Euphron frowned : " Is that Xenaides again ? You'd much better leave him to me, father. I'll take the conceit out of him. "

" But it's not that : he's quite respectful, you know. I've nothing to punish him for—I mean, just the way he talks ; I should be ashamed to do

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anything for just that. But there, that's it, he does make me ashamed somehow. I don't like it, hedgehog."

"Nonsense, father; you're too good-natured, that's all. The man thinks he can do anything, stalks about the house as if he owned it! I tell you what it is, we've got to knock some of these fancy ideas out of his head: Athens!"—he spat on the floor—"ought to be in the quarries still—that taught them!"

Timanthes shook his head. "It's all very well your talking, but you've hardly even seen the man; you go gadding about so these days. But I wish I'd never bought him. Anyway it mayn't be for long, because he's written to Athens: and if his people do buy him back, it won't do for him to go saying the bad time he had here. No, we must just let him alone."

"Well, you may be right. But—if you do catch him out, send for me."

They began talking about other things: weather and prices and the wine market at Carthage. In the meantime Xenaides, going out between the myrtle tubs in the court of the house, had met the boy Delphion, Timanthes' youngest son, who caught him by the arm. "Finished with father? Then come on!"

"Where?"

"To the beach. Our side's one man short—you must play."

"What's the game, Delphion?"

"Oh, you know, prisoners' base. It's a Doric game, Xenaides, all the fashion now!"

Xenaides, however, didn't laugh; not that he took things very seriously as a rule, but still,

after Syracuse, Dorians weren't a laughing matter. The boy perhaps saw, and hurried him down, talking hard, on to the beach where they did most of their playing. For want of an island they had their game on a little spit of rock and sand that ran out into the sea ; it was nothing like so serious or violent as the Spartan game, but still the prisoners on each side were apt to get a few mouthfuls of salt water.

The rest were all Delphion's age or thereabouts, none quite full grown ; they threw their bright-coloured tunics down on the sand and shouted at one another, bare-headed in the sun. Xenaides was much older than any of them ; he waited under the shadow of the rocks, looking out to sea, till they were ready. Delphion would have been more sensible to take one of his father's house-boys to play, but, for the moment, he was far more interested in Xenaides, and no wonder : an Athenian, captain of cavalry, a man who'd read everything that was worth reading, seen half the world, fought in the greatest war there'd ever been, and besides—Delphion being a boy of quick sensibilities—had been in the quarries, had the horse-head burnt on him. Well, wasn't that all rather fascinating when one belonged to a little dead-and-alive state like Gela ?—not that father didn't think it the finest place in the world, and of course if you looked at it one way it was. He shouted to Xenaides to come over and join the south side.

Their feet flickered on the hard sand, running and dodging and catching one another. At first Xenaides had kept rather out of it, but by-and-by the spirit of the game got into him, and he played

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well and happily. Ordinarily, he would have been much more than a match for any of them, but these last months, starved and sick in the quarries, had been too bad for six weeks' good food and quarters in Timanthes' house to put right. After a little he was caught. By the rules of the game a prisoner could try and escape until he had actually been forced over to the base. Delphion had hold of him—they had changed sides at the counting-out—and suddenly saw the lines of his face change, felt a sharp heave of the muscles under his hand, and shouted for the others to help. Two of them ran up, and the small waves twinkled round their feet as they tried to haul him back to the base. But for Xenaides the game had all gone black in a moment, his mind had darted back in panic to that last time: so had he felt hands on him, so water underfoot, ah, the blood in that little stream!—he must get away, quick, anyhow: he got one hand clear, blindly feeling for a sword, then struck hard with clenched fists at a head: hands loosened, he was away. Thirty feet off, he remembered again that it was a game and turned, and saw the others holding up Delphion, whose head swayed, white, dripping blood. He came back at once.

The sting of the salt water brought Delphion to himself again; he looked round dizzily, both hands at his forehead, wondering who had spoilt the game for him. He saw it was Xenaides, and tried to laugh though it jarred his head horribly: then almost at once felt a blur over everything and dropped again. The game stopped. Two of the others carried their friend home, glaring at Xenaides, who followed them anxiously, watching

every movement by the boy. Delphion's sister ran out and screamed, till every woman about the place was on the spot, with her own special remedy for the young master ; he tried to brush them away feebly, but they carried him off to their own quarters, and left the Athenian waiting —till Timanthes was told.

He was always afraid of doing something stupid now, of not remembering ; when any one said anything that made him angry, he would feel his head and hands grow hot, and his tongue was loosened as though he were drunk, and then something he didn't choose would happen. He had always been like that a little, but at home in the old days it was only funny, and he could control it ; but now the strength of his will was gone, and when he felt it coming there was no stopping it. He prayed he might stay himself, and said over, under his breath, a chorus that he knew of old had power like gentle hands on him, the Chorus of the Argive Women to Elektra. But perhaps he would never see the plays again.

Elektra, going to death, with both hands already
On the black lintel of the door to the house of sin,
Turn your eyes to us once, princess, oh sister unwedded,
Ere that door, opening silently, swallow you and your
purpose in :
The thing that was in your mind and now at the last you
have said it.

Listen to us, us women, who know what thing is weak-
ness,
How the strong seem like Gods, hard to hurt, hard even
to touch,
When no one answers, no help comes, for any thought or
seeking,

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When the spirit is nearly broken and pain comes over-
much :

Yet if that were the only end we would not stay to speak
you.

For the strong are not Gods : neither with sore word nor
sword smiting

Can they bruise the guarded heart of the smallest, the
most oppressed.

Ah, do not fear for the still flame you have lighted :

This from your fast shut mind nor man nor woman may
wrest,

Elektra, going to death, to the steel-bright halls of the
mighty.

He was back in the room with the roses, trying to think if there was anything it was any use saying to Timanthes ; but nobody would understand why he had hurt Delphion ; he hardly knew himself. He was glad the boy was not very bad ; it was no use saying that either. Timanthes came in, purple with anger ; he had been working himself up. The Athenian knelt quickly and stayed quite still, wanting not to hear, trying to let it all rush over him and away. Suddenly Timanthes hit him, which was more funny than painful : a rose petal came running along just under his nose, round and round on its edge. Timanthes, relieved at having done something violent, was beginning to calm down, and Xenai-des began to listen, thinking now was the moment if he was to make any excuses, thankful to be still so level-minded. He lifted his head a little and Timanthes broke out again : what a vile accent the man had, to be sure ! He was still alive and sane after Syracuse : a beating more or less from this shopkeeper wouldn't hurt him.

Yes, Timanthes was distinctly less angry than

he had been. "Now, have you got anything to say for yourself?" He was a just man at bottom, the shopkeeper. Xenaides began: "Sir, I'm more sorry than I can say. But it's the sort of game——"

All at once Euphron was there; he was wearing armour, reminding one again of the old time. "My turn, father," he said. His voice had just caught a little of the Spartan harshness, enough to shiver at. "So you think you're still at Athens? Oh, quite the young aristocrat!" he began, horribly quiet. "But it's a pity you've not learnt there's been a little change in the last year." Xenaides shivered; the words in his mouth wouldn't come. He looked down again—let this pass over too. But it would not pass over, he had to listen, and as he listened he began to feel very sick. He knew he could not stand pain so well now, and this—this would take all his standing. He squeezed his hands against his face, kneeling and shaking, and looked once at his master. But Timanthes was leaning back, blowing and puffing, his eyes on the ceiling, out of reach. Now, thought Xenaides, now I know what it is to be a slave, and then: this will be worse than the quarries because I shall be alone. Straining, he called his reason to help him: "My letter," he said, "my letter home! They'll send money—I—you——" But how could he—how could he go on with Euphron looking like that?—like all the faces that had mocked them over the edge of the quarries, out of their asphodel fields, that could not be appealed to, though you tried at first for days; but not later. He went where he was taken, stumbling. It was not till he was tied up

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that Euphron spoke again : " Athens," he said meditatively, sucking his lip and running his hand along the edge of a whip lash.

Xenaides shut his eyes tight ; for one moment Athens was there for him too, light, light, happy, and full of laughter, full of friends, incredibly far and long ago, and tiny and dear—before the fleet sailed for Syracuse. Then the mirror broke, Athens fell away, he was no more a citizen of that city, but a slave, being hurt, being shamed, gasping, crying with pain. He knew, somehow, that he could have borne it if only—if only—they gave him time to think, catch at himself between times—or a year ago—but not now.

Delphion stayed in bed for three days, with the best surgeon in Gela seeing to him, and all the women of the house cooking for him, bringing him flowers, scent, kisses, till he suddenly felt sick of it all—and got up. " Where's Xenaides ? " he had asked, and was told the man was being punished. He frowned, and answered his father crossly ; but he knew that, however little he wanted it, discipline was necessary in a big house like theirs—the biggest house in Gela ! The next time he asked, still no Xenaides. Delphion went for his brother then : " You are a beast, Euphron ! " he said. " Why do you chain him ? Why do you make him work at the mill ? Why can't I have him out ? "

Said Euphron : " That's what happens to people who hurt you," and kissed him.

Delphion rubbed off the kiss and stamped : " Let him out ! I wasn't hurt. Father, make Euphron let him out ! "

Timanthes fidgeted ; he hated thinking of anything unpleasant ; since the first day he had, for

that reason, not thought of his slave—or tried not to ; unless the roses reminded him. Not indoors—he had pinks now—but out of doors, strewing their petals on the garden paths. He answered the boy soothingly : “ It won’t do the man any harm, my Delphion, just till your brother thinks there’s no more mischief in him.”

“ But he’s not that sort ! ” said Delphion. “ You know, father ! It would do for any nigger, any barbarian ; but Xenaidēs—he’s not a common slave ! ”

“ Yes, he is,” said Euphron suddenly, unexpectedly fierce out of that spiky beard of his, “ and he’ll know it now ! And so will you when you see him. And listen to this, Delphion ; do you know what would have happened if Athens had got her way ? She’d have grabbed us all, gobbled us up, the whole of Sicily, to dangle after her and do what she told us, and lick her boots ! And there’d have been plenty of young sparks like your Xenaidēs stalking about, frizzed and scented, giving us orders and doing whatever they chose with us ! You wouldn’t have liked that, Delphion.”

“ Yes, but——”

“ Yes, but that’s what it would have been, and that’s what I’m taking out of Xenaidēs. And that’s what the quarries were for, by God !—and that’s why I like the Spartans,” he ended savagely, so that the room seemed to shake, and the other two had nothing to say for a moment.

Delphion, who was still a little weak, began to cry, and Timanthes was most uncomfortable ; he admired his eldest son for being so fierce, such a man, and yet—apart from this one thing—Xen-

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aides had always been a good servant, quick and clever and quiet, and the punishment would leave him crippled—well, not in body, but in his face, all sullen and horrible to live with, wouldn't it be? "I think all the same," said he, "you might let him off any longer at the mill."

Just then a slave came in with a thick, sealed letter that a ship's officer had just brought. Euphron handed it to his father with a sudden, unpleasant laugh; it was for the Athenian. "We must have him up now," said Timanthes, with some satisfaction, and gave the slave his orders. "See that the man's washed and—and fed," he added low, with a glance at Delphion. The slave hurried off, leaving his three masters looking at one another, Timanthes with pursed lips weighing the letter in his hand, and the boy looking triumphantly at his brother. Euphron seemed not to notice, to be absorbed in something: some thought, some hate.

By-and-by, Xenaites was brought in. Delphion jumped at him, but his brother caught him and pushed him back, then held out the letter to Xenaites, who hesitated, then snatched it like a starving dog, his hands shaking at the seal. The boy could see how his face was sunken, his eyes bloodshot, the brand mark of Syracuse standing out in white and shrivelled skin, and a sort of blurred, bent look all about him; and two nails on his right hand blackened and split. It was as if Delphion had seen a slave for the first time: there, but for the grace of God . . . The Athenian spoke to Timanthes: "Your price is still the same, sir?" Euphron started saying something, but checked himself, and "Certainly, certainly,"

fussed Timanthes, picking at the arm of his chair. Xenaides looked round for the little balance, found it, and weighed out the gold; the others looked on. He put the pile of coins down beside his master: "Now—is that all? Am I free?"

"We must make it legal, before a magistrate," said Timanthes; "but to-morrow, to-morrow will do."

"To-day," said Euphron harshly, "and out of the house he goes!"

"It's not your house!" said Delphion. "Oh, Xenaides, I'm sorry——" But the Athenian was not looking at him—he went on to Timanthes: "But you count me free from this moment?"

"Yes," said Timanthes, "oh yes."

Xenaides took a deep breath and pulled himself together jerkily, till he stood upright, light on his feet again. Then he stepped forward and hit Euphron in the face with his open hand, not very hard, but with a sting. Timanthes gasped and sank a little into his chair. Delphion twisted his hands together with a cry of excitement. But Euphron went quite white, caught Xenaides round the shoulder with his left arm and stabbed him twice—three times—into his side, so that the Athenian fell, slid from him with a queer, long, outward sigh, and died in his own blood.

Euphron leant against the table heavily. "So much for Athens," he said, but his voice shook. "We must get this—cleared up. Well, nobody need know about the letter. Father, you can see to that." But for a little while neither of the others could speak.

WILLIE WAUGH

A. E. COPPARD

ON a fine afternoon in April a man is sitting at the foot of an ash tree beside the pool of water on Peck Common. Twelve tiny ducklings on the water belong to him, and he is admiring them. There are four ash trees there, growing out of the tenderest turf and spreading over the pool; the bright air seems to swim visibly around their bare grey limbs. A carrier this man is, a little man with an old conical hat, his coat sleeves coming down over his knuckles, his hat coming down over his ears, and he is the masterpiece of the whole district for trapping a mole. Beside him a willow bush, richly embowered, also stretches out above the pool, every twig of it bearing a ball of blossom covered with yellow dust, whereon fat bees are mumbling and clinging. But the day's air comes coldly from the east, and at intervals the bees, so chilled, tumble into the pool. The man takes a branch he has broken from the palm tree and drags them to earth again, where they dry their wings and crawl into the grass for comfort. "Lend us your saw, Willie Waugh," said Peter Finch, coming suddenly upon him.

"Good-evening," said the man in the funny hat, without looking up. He had not noticed Peter's approach, for the grass was quiet under his

footfall, and then his ducklings had just paddled to the shore, and one of them was behaving queerly. It would not follow its friends, it just kept turning round and turning round, squealing all the time.

Peter Finch asked again: "Will you lend me your saw for a few nights, Willie?"

"Look at that duckling," Waugh indicated the creature with his pipe. "Do you know what the matter is with that duckling?"

"I only waunts to borrow it for a few nights," continued Peter Finch, a tall man, a thin man, who shaved in vain, so blue was his sharp chin. "The old keeper asked me to fell some trees arter I done my daily work, so it's for a bit of overtime, you see. Your big saw, if you're not a-using of it."

"It's blind, that duckling is," explained the other, "blind."

"I ain't got a saw of my own, Willie, or I wouldn't ask ye."—Peter was not to be diverted.—"I'll take care of it, you knows that, I'll take care of it well."

"I shan't kill it for a day or two, not yet I shan't. I'll see how it gets on. It eats like a blam young tiger," commented Waugh.

"Dan'l Gunn," pursued Peter, "ask me and Hoppy Marlow to fell they trees. We'em a-going to do it between us, overtime work. It 'ull put three or four pounds apiece in our pockets. If so be as you'd lend us your big saw."

"Blind as a bat," Willie Waugh continued, "that's why he keeps on turning round. It ain't got no tail now, neither."

"I thought Hoppy had got one, but he ain't.

Willie Waugh

He used to have a big saw, I thought; I quite thought that, but he says as how he didn't."

"That foal in Casby's paddock," cried Waugh, "picked it up in its mouth last night and started chawing of it like a wisp hay. That little duck! That's a fine caper, an' it? I collared that duckling away from it just in time, but his tail was gone." As disgust and indignation mounted within him Willie turned and looked Peter Finch fiercely in the eyes. "An' I gin him a kick in the stomach as cured him o' duck hunting, I warrant!"

"So I'll send my young Tommy," said Peter, "round for it to-morrow, after tea-time. Right-o." And off went Peter.

Next evening little Tom Finch came to the carrier's door to fetch the saw for his father to fell the trees along of Hoppy Marlow.

"I've changed my mind," declared Willie Waugh. "I can't lend him, tell your father."

"Our father sent me for the saw, please," repeated the child.

"And I tell you I ain't a-going to lend him. Can't you hear? I told you once and now I tell you twice. Tell your father I've changed my mind."

Away went little Tom, and soon afterwards Peter Finch appeared at the door of Waugh's cottage, which was No. 93 Peck Common, although if you took a spyglass, even, you would not, and could not, see more than ten or a dozen cottages there. Willie had crept away to the pool, but Peter saw him and went after him.

"Lend us your saw, Willie Waugh," begged Peter, "I've a job of overtime to do."

"I can't lend you," Willie said.

"Why can't you lend me your big saw?" There was a sharpish note in Peter's voice.

"I've changed my mind."

"And for why have you changed your mind?"

Willie meditated, stared at his interrogator's chest, removed his pipe with his right hand, and with the forefinger of his left he tapped the arm of Peter Finch, and began:

"I'll tell you for why, I'll diagonize it for you. You're a man in full heart of work, from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon; a full week's work, and a full week's pay you draws."

"Ah?"

"Well, there's a-plenty men roundabout here's not doing more than two or three days' work instead of a week, and they's the ones as ought to be set to do this overtime job. When you be in full heart o' work and they be not, you to go and work overtime for another man does them out of the chance."

"Ho, that's how it runs, is it?" commented Peter.

"That's it an' all. Several there be. Two of 'em I knows for certain at Creevey Lane—Moby Colfax for one—and there's Topper Oakes over at Firebrass Hill, and some more I knows. And that's why I shan't a-lend 'ee my saw."

"Topper Oakes! He couldn't fell a nut tree! Look here, did I ever do you a bad turn, Willie Waugh?"

Willie began to fill his pipe. "No, not to my knowledge, I can't say you ever did that."

"Treat me as a neighbour, then, as a neighbour should. Do me no harm. Do me no harm, and

Willie Waugh

I'll do none. Only man I ever harmed is myself. Full work and full pay, says you ; but you knows you can put that thirty shillings in your eye and sneeze on it—and *then* it wouldn't choke you."

"I understands all that . . ."

"Eight young uns I got, and a wife, and a cripple mother . . ."

"Well, that's your look-out, it's your luck. I understands all that. But if you does this over-time job you're depriving another man of his just dues, and if I lends you my saw I be just as bad."

"How d'ye make that out ?"

"Stands to reason. You be a-taking the bread out of a man's mouth. That's truth and sound sense."

Peter Finch stared at him as if he were an absurd phenomenon—an ox with a hat on, perhaps, or a pig with a toothbrush. "You're chattering as if you was the lord mayor of this parish."

"Sound truth and sound sense," repeated Willie, "sound as a bell."

"Ah, and hard as a ram's horn," quoth Peter. "There's many a man as wouldn't ever speak to you again for this, Willie Waugh. You talk of robbing men of their bread : tell me *this*—Would you lend e'er a one of 'em your big saw ?"

"If they asked me," replied Waugh imperturbably, "I might."

"Then wouldn't you be a-robbing me and mine, and Hoppy Marlow and his'n ?"

"No !"

"Course you would. Come on, I'll pay you a crown for the use of that saw."

"I couldn't take it," said Waugh, "my conscience wouldn't let me."

"Bah! If I harboured a thing like that I wouldn't call it a conscience! You're a sour neighbour, Willie Waugh, sour as varjuice. I've done a good deed to you, more than once I have, and known you all my life."

"The same to you, many a time!" ejaculated Willie. Then he lit his pipe that he always smoked with the bowl upside down.

"When the wheel of your cart come off on Cadmer Hill," continued Finch, "and we had to unempty it 'cause of a storm coming on . . ."

"I unemptied it myself," cried the carrier.

"Didn't I carry four sacks of meal home for you? On my back? Half a mile each time, and rain and sweat sopping me through!"

"Who was it drove your missus to the 'firmary when she had cancer, eh? A day's journey, that were, free and for nothing!"

"Well, and when you and your wife was down with fever, and no one come near you for fear of catching it, not even the parson, eh? Said he never knew about it . . ."

"Ah, the Peter!"

"Who looked after you then, Willie Waugh, and your stock, Willie Waugh, and emptied your slops, Willie Waugh?"

"And who collected a subscription for you when your sow died?" rejoined the carrier. "Seven pounds fourteen shillin's and ninepence ha'penny for a pig as warn't worth half that money."

"That's right enough," Peter agreed. "You been a good neighbour, good as a man ever knowed. But why do you round on me now?"

"I've not rounded on you, I'm only telling you."

Willie Waugh

"A neighbour," Peter Finch observed, "should stand *by* his neighbour, turn and turn about. I've lived next or nigh you all my life. You riz in the world, you've prospered, but I haven't."

"God bless me," cried Waugh, "when I started out to work I got three and six a week and a pound at Michaelmas. My old dad would give me a penny out of that on Saturdays."

"Oh, I knows. I knowed you, Willie Waugh, ever since you was a nipper; I knowed you when you put the tadpoles in the font at Farmer Fescot's christening."

"Five o'clock we had to get up then, and work till dark. None of this 'ere starting at seven and leaving off at five, and football, and crickets, and God knows what all! They *was* some farmers in those days, but if their old corpses could come out of their holes and see what goes on now, why, they . . . they . . . they'd go mad—it 'ud kill 'em!"

Peter was unmoved, a very unfeeling, unprincipled man.

"Too many holidays in this country," Willie rambled moodily on, "that's what there is. I'd sooner work seven days a week than six, for I don't know what to be at a' Sundays."

"We was at school then," mused Peter. "I caught the tadpoles, a tinful, and you tipped 'em in the font water. There was a racket about that."

"Ah," commented Willie, "you was afraid to do it of yourself."

"I bet you once as you couldn't swallow a butterfly . . ."

"Ah, and I ate four of 'em at once," interrupted Willie.

"But you was sick afterwards."

"Nor you didn't pay up, by dam." Waugh, leaning against one of the ash trees, smiled into the pool. "That Farmer Fescot was a good old farmer as ever was, a thoroughbred 'un."

"Thoroughly thoroughbred," granted Peter. "We cooked the liver of his piebald nag when it died, you and me!"

"His wife warn't much," declared Willie.

"No. She ought to have had her head shook. Do you recollect that circus as come by here one evening? Going out west somewheres. They pasted up bills on the barns and walls as they went along, and we dogged 'em and turned their bills all upsy down. Miles we followed that circus, and it wasn't half late when we got home!"

"Ah," chortled Willie, "I 'members you falling over the elephant's dung in the dark."

"That's a few years ago," sighed Peter, "a few years ago, thirty, forty. Ah!" He turned and sauntered away, plucking as he did so a blade of grass and chewing it as he went.

Willie called after him: "Arn't you going to take that saw?"

"If you like, Willie,"—Peter turned—"if you don't mind obliging me for a few nights."

"Well, take the blam saw," said Willie gruffly. "Think I'm going to run about arter you with it!"

So they went back to the cottage, and Peter got the saw and took it home. When he had gone Willie Waugh came and leaned over his garden gate, staring across the common at the four ash trees by the pond where the grass was so very green. The trees were budding; the sky beyond

Willie Waugh

them was glassy blue, with a cusp of new white moon, and clouds with fiery fringes hovering on the borders of everywhere. Long shadows slanted from the ash trees, and long smoke twirled from the village chimneys. Tir-a-loo sang the birds, and the eyes of the playing children shone with a golden light.

"I never see," grumbled Willie to himself, "never in all my days—such a pack of fools—as there be in this world. And," he added, "they be all alike."

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

MARY WEBB

MARGARET MAHUNTLETH, in the corner of the big settle, basked in the hearth-glow like one newly come to heaven. Warm light reddened her knitted shawl, her white apron, and her face, worn and frail. It was as if the mortal part of it had been beaten thin by the rains and snows of long roads, baked, like fine enamel, by many suns, so that it had a concave look—as though hollowed out of mother o' pearl. Some faces gather wrinkles with the years, like seamed rocks on mountains, others only become, like stones in a brook, smoother, though frailer, in the conflicting currents. Margaret's was one of these. And though she was a bit of a has-been, yet her face, as it shone from the dark settle-back, seemed young and almost angelic in its irrefragable happiness. For Marg'ret had never dreamed (no, not for an instant!) as she fought her way to Thresh-olds Farm through weather that made her whole being seem a hollow shell, that she would be invited into the kitchen. Usually she did her work in the barn. For Marg'ret was a chair-mender.

She travelled, on her small bird-like feet, all over the country, carrying her long bundle of rushes. With these she mended chairs at farms

and cottages, and even in the kitchens of rectories and in parish rooms and at the backs of churches where the people from the almshouses sat. She mended chairs mostly for other people to draw up to glowing fires and well-spread tables. She made them very flawless for weddings. For funerals she made them strong, because the people who attend funerals are generally older than those who attend weddings, and the weight of years is on them, and they have gathered to themselves, like the caddis worm, a mass of extraneous substance.

For dances Marg'ret also made them strong, knowing that in the intervals young women of some twelve stone would subside upon the knees of stalwarts rising fifteen stone.

Marg'ret knew all about it. She had been to some of the dances years ago, but people forgot to ask her to dance. Her faint tints, her soft, sad, downcast eye, her sober dress, all combined with her personality to make her fade into any background. She was always conscious, too, of the disgrace of being only a chair-mender; of not being the gardener's daughter at the Hall, or Rectory-Lucy. So people forgot she was there, and she even forgot she was there herself.

She worked hard. She could make butter baskets and poultry baskets through which not the most centrifugal half-dozen fowls could do more than insinuate anxious heads. She could make children's ornamental basket chairs, and she could do the close wickerwork of rocking chairs for nursing mothers. Winter and summer she tramped from place to place, over frozen roads and dusty roads and all the other kinds of

Over the Hills and Far Away

roads, calling at farms with her timid knock and her faint cry, plaintive and musical, soon lost on the wind—"Chairs to mend!"

Then she would take the chair or basket or mat into the orchard or the barn, and sit at her work through the long green day or the short grey day, plaiting with her pale, hollow hands. Within doors she never thought of going. She would have been the first to deprecate sheeding rushes all o'er. The warm kitchen was a Paradise to which she, a Peri, did not pretend. Its furnishings she knew intimately, but she knew them as a church cleaner might know the altar and its chalices, being, if such a thing were possible, excommunicated. Under the bowl of the sky, across the valleys she came, did her work fealty as an elf, and was gone, as if the swift airs had blown her away with the curled may petals of spring, the curved leaves of autumn.

If night drew on before she had done her work, she would sleep in the hayloft. Nobody inquired where she usually slept, any more than they concerned themselves about the squirrel that ran along the fence and was away, or the thistledown that floated along the blue sky.

So Marg'ret had never dreamed of being invited to the hearth-place. It was the most wonderful thing. Outside, the wan snowflakes battered themselves upon the panes like birds, dying. The night had come, black, inevitable, long. And to those who have no house the night is a wild beast. In every chimney a hollow wind spoke its discontent. There were many chimneys at Thresholds Farm. It was a great place, and the master was a man well-thought-of, rich.

Mary Webb

Marg'ret trembled to think she was here in the same room with him. He might even speak to her. He sat on the other side of the hearth while the servant girl laid tea—the knife-and-fork tea of farms, with beef and bacon and potatoes. A tea to remember.

He sat leaning forward, his broad, knotted hands on his knees, staring into the fire. The girl slammed the teapot down on the table and said :

“ Yer tea, master.”

Marg'ret got up. She supposed it was time now for her to creep to bed in the hospitable loft, after a kindly cup of tea in the back kitchen. It had been wonderful, sitting here—just sitting quietly enjoying the rest and the dignity of the solid furniture, and the bright fingers of the fire-light touching here a willow-pattern plate and there a piece of copper. It was one of those marvellous half-hours of a lifetime, which blossom on even to the grave, and maybe afterwards. She had never dreamed——

She softly crept towards the door, but as she went the master lifted his gloomy chestnut-coloured eyes under their thatch of grizzled hair, and so transfixed her. She could not move with that brown fire upon her, engulfing her. So he always looked when he was deeply stirred. So he had looked down at his father's coffin long ago, at his mother's last year. So he had looked into the eyes of his favourite dog, dying in his arms. The look was the realization of the infinite within the finite, altering all values. Never once in all the fifteen years during which she had been calling here had he seemed to look at Marg'ret at all.

Over the Hills and Far Away

In the almost ferocious intensity of the look she felt faint. Her face seemed like a fragile cup made to hold an unexpressed passion which was within his soul, which must find room for itself somewhere, as the great bore of water that rushes up a river must find room, some valley, some dimple where it may rest, where it may spread its strangled magnificence. She stood. Firelight filled her hollow palms; her apron, gathered in nervous fingers, so that it looked like a gleaner's, ready to carry grain; the pale shell of her face.

The servant girl, perturbed by some gathering emotion that had come upon the kitchen, remained with a hand on the teapot handle, transfixed. Marg'ret trembled, saying no word. How shall a conch-shell make music unless one lends it a voice? She was of the many human beings that wait on the shores of life for the voice which so often never comes.

Suddenly the master of the house said loudly, with his eyes still hard upon her:

"Bide!"

It was as if the word burst a dam within him.

Her being received it.

"Bide the night over," he added, in the same strange thunderous voice.

She took that also into her soul.

"And all the nights," he finished, and a great calm fell upon him. It had taken all the years of his life till now for the flood to find its valley.

Then seeing that she stood as mute and still as ever, he said:

"Coom then, take bite and sup."

And when she was seated, like a half-thawed

Mary Webb

winter dormouse at its first feast, he said to the servant girl, who still remained holding the Britannia-metal teapot (which seemed to mock Marg'ret with its inordinate convexity) :

“ Make a bed for the Missus ! ”

He was determined that no misunderstanding should vex this new-found peace, and when the girl had gone, breathing hard like an exhausted swimmer, he remained staring at Marg'ret in a kind of hunger for giving. And she, perfectly receptive, empty-handed as a Peri, let his flaming eyes dwell on her face, let his fire and his food hearten her, and so gave him her charity. And this was how Marg'ret Mahuntleth, the poor chair-mender, without will of her own or desert of her own, as far as she could see, came to be the mistress of the house and lawful wife of the master of Thresholds.

THE LOST GOD

JOHN RUSSELL

PROPHETS have cried out in print, no man regarding, and saints have been known to write their autobiographies, and even angels are credited now and then with revealing most curious matters in language quite plain and ungrammatical. But I have seen the diary of an authentic god who once went to and fro on the earth and in the waters underneath.

His record is the Book of Jim Albro, and he made it at Barange Bay, which is Papua, which is the end of the back of beyond and a bit farther yet: the great, dark, and smiling land that no white man has ever yet gripped as a conqueror, where anything can happen that you would care to believe and many things that you never would. He neglected to copyright it himself. The chances of his returning to claim it are apparently remote. And Jeckol says that fiction is stranger than truth anyhow, and pays better. So I shall feel quite safe in making free of that remarkable work, just as Jim Albro set it down with a leaden bullet on some strips of bark and left it for those who came after to find. . . .

In his very blackest hour Jim Albro must have known that somebody would come after him,

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some time. Somebody always did come after him, no matter how far and to what desperate chance his trail might lead. He was that kind. All his days he never lacked the friend to hunt him up and to pack him home when he was helpless, to pay his bills or to bail him out at need. One of those irresistible rascals born to a soft place near the world's heart whose worst follies serve only to endear them, whose wildest errors are accepted as the manifestation of an engaging caprice, while they go on serenely drawing blank cheques against destiny !

It is odd that he should have had to settle up in the end unaided, cut off from all help, completely isolated—and yet with the savour of popular admiration still rising about him, amid the continued applause of a multitude.

"A chap like Albro can't simply drop out of sight, like you or me might," said Cap'n Bartlet thoughtfully. "He's filled too much space and pulled through too many scrapes. He's had his way too often with men and devils—and women too."

We were strung along the rail on the after-deck of the little *Aurora Bird* as she began to grope her passage through the barrier reef, a silent lot. Talk had been cheap enough on the long stretch up the Coral Sea, when every possible theory of Albro's fate and the fate of his three white shipmates and their native crew had been thrashed to weariness. But now suspense held us all by the throat, for we were come at last to Barange, the falling-off place.

And something else held us—I could call it a spell and not be so far wrong. The lazy airs offshore bore down to us the scent that is like noth-

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ing else in the world, of rotting jungle and teeming soil; of poisonous, lush green, and rare, sleepy blossoms, heavy with death and ardent with a fierce vitality. This is the breath of Papua, stirring warm on her lips, that none who has known between loathing and desire can ever forget. Many men have known it, traders, pearlers, recruiters, gold hunters, and eagerly have sought to know more and have died seeking. There she lies, the last enigma, guarding her secrets still behind her savage coasts and the fringe of her untracked forests—the black sphinx of the seas, lovely, vast, and cruel.

We had been watching the widening gap of the bay off our quarter, the palm-tufted threads of beach, the sullen hills aquiver in the heat haze, and the nameless dim mountains beyond. For an hour or more the only sounds had been Bartlet's gruff orders to the Kanaka at the wheel, the gentle crush of foam overside, the musical cry of the leadsman and the tap-tap of reef points and creak of tackle as our sails slatted and filled again. Each one of us was intent for some sign of the disaster. Each one of us had a question pressing on his tongue—pretty much the same question, I judge—but nobody cared to voice it until the cap'n spoke. He had had, we knew, rather a special interest in Albro. . . . "Throw him how you like, he'd land on his feet," he said.

"Aye," confirmed Peters, the lank trader from Samarai. "Or if so be he couldn't stand, why the crowd would fair fight for the privilege of proppin' him up and buyin' him the last drink in the house."

"You think he's alive?" piped Harris then.

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"I think he's alive," said Bartlet, without turning his shaggy grey head. "He weren't made to finish hugger-mugger in no such hell-hole. I'm backing the luck of Jim Albro, that always had his way."

"Like as not," said Peters, and spun the cylinder of his big Webley revolver and chuckled a little; "like as not we'll find him sittin' on a stump all so lofty with the niggers squatted round in rows, addressin' of the congregation."

You will note—and a queer thing too—that this happened before we had learned the first sure detail of the affair at Barange Bay.

It was now the 20th of April. On the 2nd of November preceding, the pearling schooner *Timothy S.* had cleared from Cooktown on her lawful occasions for Joannet Harbour in the Louisiades. She had never reached Joannet. A month later she had been spoken by a Sydney steamer up among the Bismarck Group, where she had no ostensible business to be. And early in March some cannibal gossip of the west coast, friendly or only boastful, had passed word to some missionary of a British schooner cut off at Barange. That was strictly all. It remained for certain friends and backers at Cooktown, with or without lawful occasion, to link up the vaguely rumoured outrage with the actual and private destination of the *Timothy S.* and to send our search party go-look-see.

But Jeckol snorted. . . . You could hardly blame him, at that. Among the five of us he was the only man who had never crossed Jim Albro at one point or another in the career of that eccentric luminary. And besides, it was Jeckol's business

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to snort. You must have read his clever bits in the *Bulletin*—those little running paragraphs that snap and fume like a pack of Chinese crackers? He had been loafing about Bananaland on vacation just before we started, and of course he got wind and wished himself along. Trust a press-man to know the necessary people and a chance for copy.

"I've heard a deal of talk of this Albro since we weighed anchor," he said. "What's all about him? He wasn't commanding the *Timothy S.*?"

"No," drawled Peters. "No—he didn't command, Mullhall was skipper."

"Did he launch the scheme then? Was he the discoverer of this wonderful virgin shell-bed they were going to strip?"

"No," returned Peters. "No—you couldn't say he had any regular standin' in the expedition. . . . He shipped as a sort of supercargo—didn't he, Cap'n Bartlet?"

"Cabin boy, more likely," said Bartlet in his slow way. "Or bos'n's mate—or even midship-mite."

Jeckol eyed us all around, but nobody smiled.

"You're getting at me," he said, "Never mind. Only I'm going to write the yarn, you know. You'd much better help me pick the right hero. What's your famous Albro like?"

"The takingest chap that ever stood in shoe leather," cried young Harris with a rush. "Absolutely. I never saw him only twice, but I remember just how he looked and what he said. The first time he was drunk—but—but that was all right. He sang 'Mad Bess of Bedlam' to make your hair curl. And one night in Brisbane when

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he took on the Castlereagh Slasher for two rounds——”

“Six foot of mad Irishman,” said Peters, “and about three inches of dreamy Spaniard atop of that—to put a head on the mixture, you might say. Blue-black, wavy beard and an eye like a blue glass marble——”

“With the sunlight shining through!” Harris shot in.

“James O’Shaughnessy Albro.” Peters lingered upon the name. “As to his luck, Cap’n Bartlet may be right, but I wouldn’t call it so. He was born too late. He should ha’ been a conquistador—d’y’ call ’em?—and gone swaggerin’ up and down in the old time holdin’ pepper rajahs to ransom and carvin’ out kingdoms. Whereas he was only Jim and anything you like between a navvy and a millionaire.

“Nobody knows what he’d done back home—prob’ly he got to bulgin’ over too many boundaries and needed room. He blew into the Endeavour River one season with a tradin’ schooner of his own—curly maple saloon, satin divans, silver-mounted gun racks—by Joe, you’d ha’ thought he was goin’ to trade with cherryubims for golden harps in the isles of paradise. And so he very nearly did, too, what with the dare-devil chances he took, till he lost craft and all on a race back from Thursday Island.”

“Wrecked?” asked Jeckol.

“Just gambled. Old man Tyler could lay his *Hawfinch* half a point nearer the wind than a chap has a right to expect from an archbishop. Jimmie paid over at the dock head and went weavin’ his way up Charlotte Street a beggar, turned into a

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political barney they were havin' there, and made them a roarin' speech on somethin'—temperance prob'ly. And, by Joe, if they didn't elect him a divisional councillor the next day!"

"I've heard of that," proffered Harris with a grin. "Wasn't it the same winter he did a quick dash to the tin mines for his health? It seemed there was a beauteous and wealthy widow. He couldn't have loved her half so well had he not loved her pretty under-housemaid more. So he started for Mount Romeo. . . . My word, he'd turn the worst scrape into a romance, that fellow! They say he made a big winning at Romeo—just to console himself."

"He made a dozen winnings. And I've helped him to a job as warehouse clerk at Samarai when he wore no shirt under his coat, and gunny bags for trousers. That's what the cap'n here means by his luck, I fancy, because you couldn't keep him down. Capitalist, miner, politician, stevedore—it was all one to Jimmie. Look how he brought up the *Creswick* that nobody else would touch when she went ashore on Turn-again Island, cleared four thou' off her by the nerviest kind of work, and dropped it all on the next Melbourne Cup. Little he cared. He was havin' his own way with life—as you say, Cap'n Bartlet."

But Jeckol frowned and pursed his thin lips.

"He never saw the game that was too big for him," said Harris, "nor held back his smile nor his fist."

"Darlinghurst jail is full of the same sort," observed Jeckol dryly.

"You ask what he was like?" Cap'n Bartlet swung around beside the wheel. "I'll tell you.

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I'm married to a girl that was pretty chief with Jim Albro once. There's no living man dare stand and say a word agen my wife—the finest in Queensland, sir—but I knew all the talk when I married her. And yet you see me here."

"Ah! With an entirely friendly purpose?" queried Jeckol, peering at him. "Or to make sure he won't come back?" . . .

I saw the colour flood to Bartlet's rugged cheek and ebb again.

"In friendship," he answered simply.

Jeckol made a gesture like a salute, with a hint of mockery perhaps, but he said no more. And we others said rather less. Bartlet brought the schooner smartly about on her heel and laid her square through the gap and we turned again to that sinister bay, opening before us like the painted depth of a stage set, whereon we were now to discover and reconstruct our obscure tragedy.

We drew a quick curtain on it. Scarcely had we come abreast the near headland when one of the brown, breech-clouted sailors leaped up forward with a yell, and each startled eye swept past his darting finger to the wreck of the *Timothy S.* There could be no manner of doubt—a green hull with a black water-line, bedded low and on her side, hatches awash, just behind a shallow jag of the shore well away to leeward. We needed no glasses to pick her name or to see that nothing remained of life or value about the battered shell. She lay in her last berth, in the final stage of naval decay, stripped to the shreds of rigging, her masts broken short, and bare as bleached bones; and from her whitened rail rose up a flight of

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boobies that cried like shrill, mournful ghosts and vanished. . . .

"Aye—that's the end of their pearlin' cruise," said Peters grimly. "That's Mullhall's craft, sure enough. The south-west gales would drive her there. She must ha' been anchored just about where we're passin' now, and I shouldn't wonder."

"On the shell bank?" sniffed Jeckol, leaning to squint down into the sparkling blue.

"Fair under our keel, I'd say."

At a signal the leadsman had flown his pigeon again, though we were well past all reefs.

"Lord! Ten fathom!" Harris echoed the cry. "That's diving! I heard it was a deep-water bed. D'you suppose they were at it when the niggers jumped 'em?"

"I figger they were," said Peters. "See that scrubby bit of island?—the point's not a hundred yards away. A dozen canoes could mass up there and never be noticed. By Joe, it's plain as paint. The ship snugged down for business—the diver below, like as not—pumps and tackle goin'—all hands busy on board and the watch calculatin' profits to three decimals behind the windlass. Aye, there's your treasure hunter, every time! Then perhaps a slant of wind settin' around that point to give the raid a runnin' start—and——"

"Him finish," concluded Harris briefly. "All over in ten minutes. They'd hardly know what hit 'em. A black cloud—that's all. A black cloud"

And Peters was right—it was all too plain. None of us but had heard tales enough, and stark history enough, of these blood-stained barriers that hedge the true unknown continent. To our

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waiting minds his few phrases threw a sharp picture of the careless ship, the stalking death, and the swift horror that must have followed. There lay the wreck and there the empty bay. The rest we could fill in for ourselves, or just about.

"Then what are you doing here?" asked Jeckol at last.

Peters was already dealing out rifles and ammunition by the deck-house, and Bartlet, looking drawn and old, did not seem to hear, but Harris jerked an answer over his shoulder with the flippancy of emotion. "Oh, you can't tell—we might find some smoked heads to bring away."...

A few minutes later the cap'n was giving his last instructions, while we of the shore dropped to our places in the big whaleboat.

"You're not to follow us in whatever happens—mind that. If you sight more'n three canoes at a time, knock out the shackles and run for open sea. I'm leaving you Obadiah—he's a goodish shot—and four of the best boys."

The young mate nodded. He hated not coming with us, but Bartlet knew. This was Papua, where wise men take no chance and fools seldom live long enough to take a second.

We took none ourselves as we rowed slowly shoreward and sheered off out of spear throw, watching the wall of jungle. There is no beach inside Barange, only the mangrove roots that writhe down to the water's edge like tangled pythons through the oozy bank of salt marsh. It was very still and very clear in the afternoon sunlight, though the heat pouring out over us

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seemed the exhalation of a great steam bath, choked with stewing vegetation. Now and then our crew of clean-limbed Tonga boys rested on their oars, with timid, limpid gaze turned askance. We heard their quick breathing and the drip from the oar blades—nothing else. At such times we floated in a mirage where each leaf and frond and looped liana, with its mirrored image, had an unnatural brilliance and precision, like a laboured canvas or a view seen through a stereoscope.

And there stole upon us again the oppressive solicitation of the land, subtle and perilous. Behind the beauty and wonder of it, beyond those bright shores and the first low foothills of the range—what? Nobody knows, that is the charm and the lure. Peoples, religions, empires untouched since the birth of time—fabulous wealth, mountains of gold, cliffs of ruby, “cataracts of adamant,” any marvel that fantasy still dares to dream in a prosaic century. They may be; no man has ever drawn the map to deny them. They must be: why else should the sphinx smile? . . .

“I suppose a hundred woolly-heads are spying on us now,” whispered Jeckol suddenly. “Why don’t they do something?” He fiddled nervously with his rifle and sniffed. “What a place! This air is deadly—rotten with fever. Faugh! It’s animal. It’s like—it’s like a tiger’s throat!”

I blinked at the little chap and with the same glance was aware of Peters standing up in the bow. The trader was just lighting a short-fused stick of dynamite from his cigar. Before I could cry murder he had lobbed it in and shot the bush.

It struck with the smash of all calamity in that

utter quiet. The trees sprang toward us and the roar rolled back from angry rocks. Like a multi-coloured dust of the explosion burst a myriad of screaming birds, lories, parakeets, kingfishers, flashing motes of green and blue and scarlet in the sunshine. But they dwindled and passed. The echoes died. The smoke drifted away and the green wall closed up without a scar ; the silence engulfed us once more, floating there, futile invaders who assaulted its immense riddle with a squib.

"They don't seem to care much," giggled Jeckol.

But Bartlet raised a finger. Far away in the wood something stirred. It drew nearer, with long pauses, pressing on, and at last charging recklessly through the undergrowth. We had the spot covered from half a dozen rifles as there broke out at the verge a creature that leaped and clung among the creepers.

"Mahrster!" it cried, imploring. "Mahrster!"

A man—though more like a naked, starving ape with his knobby joints and the bones in a rack under his black skin—and shaken now by the ecstasy of terror! Not at us. He faced the guns without wincing. His beady eyes kept coasting behind him the way he had come as if he looked to see a dreadful hand reach from the thicket and pluck him back. The jungle, the land, was what he feared.

"Mahrster!" he gasped, "you take'm me that fella boat along you! One fella ship-boy me—good fella too much!"

"What name?" challenged Peters. "What fella ship?"

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From the chattered reply we caught a startling word.

"By Joe—he's one of their boys! Give way, cap'n. . . ."

We edged in until Peters could yank the quaking bundle aboard and pulled again to safety from the mangrove shadow, while the fugitive stammered his story in broken *bêche de mer*.

It was true, we had found a survivor from the lost *Timothy S.*: Kakwe, he called himself, and he had come to Barange "long time before altogether." Two months, at least, we judged. In the attack on the schooner he had escaped by swimming. Himself a Papuan, of a different tribe and region, he had taken to the tree tops after the fashion of his own people, the painted monkey folk of Princess Marianne Straits—a facility to which he owed his life, it appeared, for he had since lived on fruits and nuts among the cockatoos, undiscovered.

This much we gathered from his gabble before Peters caught him up.

"But the others—them white fella?"

"All finish," said Kakwe bluntly.

"How?" cried Peters.

"No savee, me. Too much fright—walk along salt water—get to hell along beach, along tree. Me fright like hell!"

His account tallied with our own theory of the massacre, but he had seen no bodies brought ashore, could not identify the murderers, could not say where the native village lay or how to reach it, would not guide any one into that bush on any consideration. For the rest—this

was a "good fella place" to get away from quickly.

"Ah!" said Jeckol, sympathizing. "And that's a true word."

So indeed it seemed, and it is odd to think how close we were to giving up then. Aye, we were that close. We drifted out toward the anchorage and looked helplessly around us. The place was so huge, so baffling. Hopeless to search farther among empty swamps and forests, to grope at large in this hushed wilderness, to coerce a jungle. The cruisers that have bombarded these same coasts on many a punitive expedition have learned how hopeless—against Papua, who keeps her secrets.

We must have been half-way back to the *Aurora Bird* when Bartlet, sitting thoughtful in the stern, made the sign that brought us all up sharp.

"He's lying," he said quietly.

Jeckol's nerves jumped in protest.

"Eh—what? The black? He's only scared half to death. You wouldn't blame him for wanting to get out of this trap, would you? I do myself."

"He couldn't have lived overhead the whole nest o' them all this time without learning something," declared Bartlet.

"Why should he lie?"

But Peters had risen to snatch around that weazened face, blank as a mummy's—his own was alight. "By Joe, and a timely reminder. When you've got to ask why a Papuan nigger should lie you've gone pretty wide! As for scare—what d'y' suppose he must ha' seen to scare him so?"

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Here he bent our monkey man over a thwart, and introduced him affectionately to the Webley. . . .

"You fella Kakwe," he said, "my survivin' jewel—I forgot your breed. I should ha' begun by bang'm black head b'long you. Now don't stop to gammon. Whatever you're holdin' back you *show*—savee? S'pose you no show'm straight, me finish 'long you close up altogether!"

And Kakwe showed. Dominated by superior wickedness, with all the black man's docility under the instant threat, he collapsed quite simply at the touch of steel, and he showed—the nook where a tiny, hidden creek flowed down among the mangroves, the winding course that led by the swamp's edge through dank and darksome channels to a trodden mud bank and Barange village itself, tucked away there like a huddle of giant hives in a back lot. This time we paused for no manoeuvring. Even Jeckol grabbed a boat-hook and we pushed through, eager to strike on a definite lead at last.

Though we might have saved our energy, for the wild had its surprise in waiting. The village was silent, deserted, tenantless.

We landed at the square, to call it so, a rude clearing on which the few houses faced, those sprawling, spacious communal dwellings—palaces among huts—that sometimes amaze the explorer along the west coast. None opposed us. Nothing moved, not so much as a curl of smoke. An insect hummed in the sun like a bullet, and I take no shame to say I ducked. But that was all. And when the grovelling Kakwe led us to a wide platform that ran breast high across the

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front of the largest house, we stood with rifles propped and quickened pulses, staring stupidly at the thing we had come this far to find. . . .

Only a box, lying on the middle of the platform, under the shadow of the lofty thatch—a small, brass-bound chest such as sailormen love and ships carry everywhere! “Loot!” snorted Jeckol. “Well——”

But Cap’n Bartlet had laid hold of another trove, a coil of ringed rubber tubing, neatly disposed about the chest.

“What’s there?”

“A diver’s air pipe,” stated the cap’n.

“What about it?”

“It’s been cut—top and bottom.”

We crowded for a look, and I saw his tanned fist tremble ever so slightly.

“A diver’s pipe,” he repeated. “A diver, d’you see? They had a diver, and—according to your notion, Peters——” He drew a slow breath. “What—what if that there diver *did* happen to be overboard at the minute the rush came?”

And then came the voice of Peters, cool and drawling: “Some one’s left a message on the box.”

As we spun around he turned it over atilt, so that all might see the bold letters, scarred in lead, of that laconic legend—all but Bartlet, who fumbled for his spectacles. “Writ with a Snider bullet, I take it,” continued the trader. “One of them soft-nosed kind as supplied to heathen parts for a blessin’ of civilization.”

“Read it, can’t you?” begged the cap’n.

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And this was the notice Jeckol read :



The Crew of the Schooner *Timothy S.* of Cooktown that
tried a cast with fortune and turned a deuce

Barange Bay, Jan. 22, 19—

J. MULLHALL, *master*

B. SMYTHE, *mate*

HENRY NEW

BAMBA, KOHO

KAKWE, JACK-JACK

MENOMI, FRANK

Hic finis fandi



Cap'n Bartlet removed his hat and wiped away a steam of sweat with deliberate care and a red-barred kerchief. "Sounds natural," he observed, clearing his throat. "Though I never did make much of that 'hic' language."

"It means 'here ended the talk,' or something of the kind," explained Jeckol. "But still," he added, quite seriously, "the list isn't complete, you know. Where's your friend Albro?"

Peters rolled the white of an eye on him. "Is it your fancy," he inquired, "that the niggers run much to writin' epitaphs? Or books?"

He held up to our gaze the object he had found on lifting the lid of the box—a packet of thin bark strips covered with coarse markings and bound with a twist of fibre which next he unknotted, to run the leaves over in his hand. "I knew he was alive," said Cap'n Bartlet simply. . . .

And that was the way we won to the story of James O'Shaughnessy Albro. Even now I can recall each tone and gesture of its telling, each detail of the group we made there in empty Barange village: the trader's drawl and check as he read a line or turned to Kakwe with a

question or flung in some vivid comment of his own ; the strained attention on Bartlet's earnest face ; the incredulous sniff and squint of little Jeckol, still unsubdued, fidgeting about ; the statued bronze figures of our Tonga boys as they stood leaning patiently on their rifles, awaiting the master's next whim ; the massed ring of the jungle ; the odd, high-peaked houses with their cavernous fronts like gaping and grinning listeners ; the lances of sunlight that began to splinter and fall out among lengthening shadows across the open ; and through all and over all the heat and the smell and the brooding, ominous, inscrutable mystery of Papua !

Seeking wealth I found glory. I went below as an amateur diver and I came up a professional god. But I wish I could find which son of a nighthawk it was that cut my pipe. I'd excommunicate him on the altar.

This is a page from the Book of Jim Albro, and it shows him as he lived. Later entries are not so clear, not by any means so sprightly, and some are pitiful enough in all truth. It must have been set down in the early hours of his reign, while he was still in the flush of his stupendous adventure, before he had begun to understand what lay ahead. But here was the man "with an eye like a blue glass marble," that "never held his fist or his smile." No other could have written it after the events he had survived.

Just as Peters inferred to have been the case, the attack on the *Timothy S.* caught the whole crew of pearl hunters unready. They had seen no natives at Barange, they kept no look-out, and when Albro stepped off the ladder that morning

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of 22nd January he left his shipmates contentedly employed on deck. He never saw any of them again, or—what might have been a different matter—any part of them. He went down to the shell bed, and while he was there the black raiders made their sweep of the schooner.

It is likely the savages took the diving lines for an extra mooring—it is certain they knew nothing whatever about the apparatus—and Albro's first warning was the cutting of that air pipe, when he found his pressure gone and water trickling through the inlet valve. Fortunately, he was just preparing to ascend and had tightened his outlet to inflate the suit. Fortunately, too, his helmet was furnished with an adjustable inlet and he was able hastily to close both valves.

He tugged at his life-line, but it drew loose in his hand. He turned over on his side to look upward, but he could see nothing—only the vague blue twilight through which the slack coils of his severed air pipe came sagging. Then he knew that he had been cut off, and the hideous fear that lies in wait for every diver amid the perils and loneliness of the sea bottom seized upon him. He might have popped to the surface by throwing off his forty-pound weights, for he was aware that no chance accident could have served him so, and his impulse was to get away, from schooner and all, to shore. Under water he had some few minutes to live, perhaps four or five, as long as the enclosed air should last him. Frantically he began to struggle toward the beach, yielding to a moment's panic that was to cost him dear. . . . While trying blindly to slash free the useless pipe he lost his diver's knife.

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The rotten coral burst and sank under footing. Clogging weeds enwreathed and held him back with evil embrace. A tridacna spread its jaws before his steps, so that he nearly plunged into that deadly spring trap of the deep. But he kept on up the slope ; his keen spirit rallied and bore him through, and he came surging from the waves at last on a point of rocks outside the bay where he could cling and open the emergency cock in the helmet. The suit deflated and he breathed new life. But here he suffered his second immediate mishap, for as he scrambled to his feet a dizziness took him and he slipped and pitched forward heavily, and with a great clang of armour the god fell fainting at the very threshold of his world.

Broke left arm getting ashore. Walking the beach when I met the niggers. They dropped on their faces, and I saw I was elected.

These are the words with which Jim Albro chooses to make his note of a scene that can scarcely have had its parallel in human experience. With two dozen words, no more. You figure him there, I hope, that muffled colossus with his huge copper helm flashing red and his monstrous cyclopean eye agleam, striding along the strip of white beach against the hostile green hills of Papua. You see him break, an incredible apparition of power and majesty, upon the view of the dusky cannibal folk and stand towering over their stricken ranks, triumphant—a glimpse as through the flick of a shutter that passes and leaves the beholder dazzled and unsatisfied ! But the whole record is only a series of such glimpses, some

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focused with startling lucidity, some clouded and confused, and all too brief.

One other bit remains to fix the picture—an inimitable splash of colour, flung at the end of a perplexing page. . . .

I picked out the chief devil-devil doctor, and raised him to honour. Old Gum-eye. Friend of mine.

Mark the spirit of the man. Whole chapters could supply no clearer tribute to his resilience and entire adequacy. Unerringly he took the right course to enforce the rôle thus amazingly thrust upon him and to establish his godhead. Already he had caught up the situation, had put its shock behind him. The inscription on the box remains his only reference to the loss of the schooner and her crew. And while this might seem to argue a certain lack of sensibility, I cannot feel it was so with Albro. His was a nature essentially episodic, prompt to the play of circumstance. The thing was done and past crying over; the blacks had acted by their lights, and he had very swiftly to act by his. They had given him his cue. How well he filled the part we can guess. By evening he had been installed in some kind of temple or devil-house as an accredited deity to the Barange tribes. . . .

Here ends the first part of the book, so far as its unnumbered and fugitive entries can be arranged—the first part and the only part quite comprehensible, before the haze of distress and anxiety has dimmed our image of that strange god, whose mortality was all too real. He began

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its composition that same night, picking up the Snider cartridge and the bark strips while still he had some measure of liberty. Perhaps he foresaw that he would want to leave the record. Perhaps he merely sought distraction, and he had need of it.

Squatting above his own altar, he prepared his own epistle. Around his sanctuary slept a guard of devil doctors, priests, sorcerers—he uses all three terms. No sleep for Albro. But while he wrestled there alone through long hours he found the pluck to jot those early notes by the flare of a guttering torch, beguiling the pain of his broken arm and the new terror that was now rapidly closing upon him.

Like a glint of lightning from a cloud comes the following spurted item, written the next day :

*Forty hours of this. Am growing weaker. My arm—
[word scratched out]. Had to give up trying to start the
glass in my helmet. Can't budge it. . . .*

Soon afterwards occurs another passage in the same startling altered key :

Tried to get away this [morning], but the priests too suspicious. I wanted to try smashing the glass on a rock. Likely would have burst my ear drums anyway—

And further :

If I could get hold of a knife for three minutes. Bamboo stick [part illegible here]—can't tear vulcan canvas. No use. . . .

When Peters read those lines aloud and looked up he confronted a sickly ring of auditors.

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" Good God ! " breathed Bartlet. "*He couldn't get out !* "

The knowledge of Albro's actual plight crashed upon us all in just that phrase, and I leave you to gauge its impact. We had had no hint of it. Here was the diary before us. We were only waiting to learn the present address of the diarist. Indeed, our whole attitude toward the singular discovery we were making had been quite cheerful, even exultant, like that of children who follow the tribulations of some favourite hero, secure of the happy solution.

" Couldn't get *out* ? " squeaked Jeckol. " How do you mean—he couldn't ? "

" He was locked up in that blasted diving dress ! "

" Locked up ? " . . .

" Sewed up—sacked up," said Peters heavily. " Did you ever see the damn' stuff ? He calls it canvas, which it ain't, but tanned twill—two-ply—with rubber between. He can't tear his way out with a stick, he says. And small wonder. Talk about strait-jackets ! "

" But—but why doesn't he take off the helmet ? "

Peters stared unseeing at the packet in his hand, and his face was saturnine.

" By Joe, what a mess ! " he murmured. " What a beau-ti-ful mess ! Look here—d'y' know a diver's outfit ? First he wears a solid breastplate—see ?—that sets about his shoulders. Then the helmet fits on that with segmental neck rings and screws hard down with a quarter turn to a catch. Aye, there's a catch to snap it home. . . . And where is that catch ? Why, at the *back* !

No diver was ever intended to take off his own helmet ! ”

We could only blink at him dumbly.

“ Albro couldn’t reach it. Of course if he should manage to rip away the cloth from the eyelets he’d be all right—he’d simply shift the whole upper works. But them eyelets, now, they lock down all around through a vulcanized collar. He couldn’t reach more’n two of them either.”

“ There’s the glass——”

Peters offered the diary.

“ What does he say himself ? There’s only one removable glass to a helmet and that’s in front—an inch thick and screws tight in a gun-metal socket. It’s guarded with a gridiron of bars—same as the two side glasses. He wants to break it, but he can’t. He wants to unscrew it, but he can’t. He wants to cut himself loose, but he has no knife. Do you see him—by Joe !—do you see him twistin’ and writhin’ and fightin’ for his life in there—*with one good arm ?* ”

“ Why,” cried Jeckol, in sudden appalled perception, “ he couldn’t even eat. He’s starving inside that suit ! ”

“ Starving ? ” echoed Bartlet, from colourless lips. “ God—if that was all ! He’s dying of thirst by inches ! ” . . .

I do not know how it struck Jeckol, but it seemed to me as if a blackness came in upon the sun.

“ Go on,” urged Bartlet. “ Go on ! ”

But it was not so easy to go on. Peters found whole pages of the Book impossible to decipher. At places it lapsed to a mere jumble of sprawling characters. Again the soft lead was hopelessly

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blurred over, where the pages had been often thumbed, or perhaps crumbled and thrown aside. He shuffled them hastily and we hung upon his search.

. . . uneasy god. They got me tied up now to keep me safe [words missing] joke, to pass out here like a rat under a bell jar. Not me. I don't mean to. . .

Curious. When Peters resumed the thread, when he read that eloquent line, those of us who had known Jim Albro nodded solemnly, one to another, as if sharing a profound and secret thrill. For this was the man's real triumph—and we felt it then, regardless of the outcome—that alone, beyond any conceivable aid for the first time in his life, speechless, helpless, at the end of all those amiable arts which had given him his way so often with men and devils, and women too, Jim Albro was still the Jim Albro “that you couldn't keep down.”

His body was consuming and shrivelling with its own heat. He had to scheme for each scant breath he drew, spreading the dress and collapsing it at short intervals to renew the foul air. He had to view the tempting tribute laid out before the altar: juicy mangoes and figs and sugar-cane, wild berries and young drinking coco-nuts freshly opened, with the new, cool milk frothing up at the brim. He had to receive the homage of a people, and to count by the wheeling sun how many hours of torment were left him. Worse than all, he had to withstand the pitiless irony of it, the derisive grin of fate that drives men mad. He did these things, and he would not yield. He did not mean to. And lest you should think the phrase

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a mere flourish—observe the testimony of the Book. . . .

The tribes flocked in that second day to do him honour. There was a great gathering in the square. Some vivid pantomime was displayed before the high seat. Some unusual rites were enacted before the temple, when the bamboo pipes and drums were going and the doctors wore their vermilion mop wigs and masks of ceremony, and chains of naked dancers were stamping and circling to the chant. Jim Albro watched and noted it all behind his solid inch of plate glass; not passively, not indifferently, but with close attention and the very liveliest interest. Aye, this god took an interest in the welfare of his people!

Heaven knows what he saw in the Papuans of Barange. By all accounts they are a plum-black race of rather superior ferocity—six feet is their medium stature, and their favourite dish a human ear, nicely broiled. So the old traders report, and never an explorer has improved the description. It required some one who could sit down among them without losing his head—quite literally—to learn more. Albro filled the bill. He had nothing to do but to sit. And while he sat he busied himself with the thoughts that have made the strangest, and blindest, reading in the diary.

A prime lot of raw material. Why [do?] people always lie about niggers? Unspoiled [part illegible] the makings. Their orators told me in dumb show [words missing] behind the hills [lines missing]. . . . Wonderful!

Wonderful, he says. Wonderful what? Chances perhaps. Opportunities. Possibilities. Certainly

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nobody else ever had such as lay before Jim Albro if he could have won free to take them, as a conqueror, as a god. Was he dreaming even then of empire? Had he had a glimpse into the meaning of Papua that struck fire to his roving and restless soul? Had he fallen enamoured of the sphinx, and had she drawn the veil for him? It may be. The fact stands that, fevered and tortured as he was, burning with thirst and pain, he discovered something capable of rousing that cry from him. We hear the cry, and that is all we hear—nearly.

. . . suppose I should take a hand at this dumb show myself. I could do it. I know I could. Am going to trust old Gum-eye And afterward . . .

Peters looked up from the last page.

"Well?" said Jeckol impatiently.

"That's the end," announced Peters.

I cannot say what the breathless group of us had been expecting. Possibly the first-hand memoir of a miracle would have satisfied us, or the harrowing confessions and last wishes of the moribund. But so natural and unfanciful a thing as a full stop to the tension left us stupefied. We felt aggrieved, too, as if the author should have postponed his business long enough to let us know whether he was dead or not.

"It can't be!" cried Jeckol, all abroad.
"How could it end there? What happened to him? Where is he?"

Peters swung his gaze around the vacant clearing and the impenetrable palisade of the forest.

"This was written three months ago, remember," he said.

"But he had a plan," insisted Jeckol. "He

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surely had a plan. He says he was going to do something. He'd found a friend he could trust. What next ? ”

“ The friend must ha' failed him.”

Cap'n Bartlet shook himself like one awaking. “ No friend would have failed him,” he said deliberately. “ And—you're forgetting that ship-boy again.”

Once more, with a rattled oath, Peters pounced on the unfortunate Kakwe, quailing beside him. Once more he brought to bear the persuasion he best knew how to use ; and once more the black boy submitted, wholly, and showed. He had nothing to tell. He could throw no light on events. But he had seen from the trees where the “ white fella mahrster him diver ” forgathered with all the fiends of the pit, whereat he was “ too much fright,” and he showed us this time up the platform of the identical wide-thatched house by which we had been standing. We crept in through the low entrance and across a floor of sagging bamboo mats, and found ourselves before a curtain of pandanus that hung midway. We were long past astonishment, but Jeckol, arresting a gesture, dropped his hand.

“ I daren't,” he whimpered.

It was Bartlet who put the curtain aside. And there, in the twilight of the place, we saw the god as he had appeared in his recent earthly phase. His great copper head gleamed at the back of a shallow niche, made fast against the wall. The muffled, stiff clumsiness of his diving dress revealed an heroic figure, still disposed in the attitude of a sitting Buddha, with the leaden-soled

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diving shoes thrust out by either knee. His single huge eye glared down at us balefully from over the altar as we stood, overwhelmed in the presence.

"And so he did—pass out," said Jeckol.

Something had caught the quick eye of Peters. Horrified, we saw him step forward and lay a vigorous and sacrilegious hold on that high divinity, saw the shape start and tremble as with life, saw it shake and flutter like a bundle of rags in the wind, and flap—emptily. . . .

"Yes," said Peters. "He's passed out, right enough. Leastways from here. Passed out, and on. And quite easy too. Look at these slits—would you?"

The diving suit had been laid open like a stripped pelt with long cuts of a keen blade, one down the middle of the back, one across the shoulders, and others connected along the inside of each limb to the wrists and ankles.

"Gone!"

"Gone," confirmed Peters. "Whether the niggers dug him from it piece by piece like the kernel from a nut, or whether that friend of his helped him to shed complete—you can take your choice. In either case he's gone—and gone this time to stay."

"There's no—no blood!" gasped Jeckol. "Anyhow!"

Cap'n Bartlet had removed his hat to polish his shiny forehead with the colourful kerchief, and he was looking out of the door over the tops of the trees to the far blue and nameless mountains of Papua, with an eye at peace.

John Russell

"You could always bank on the luck of James O'Shaughnessy Albro," he said simply. "I knew he was alive."

But Jeckol was still reeling.

"I shan't write this yarn," he assured us earnestly. "It's too—it's too—and besides, there's no end to it. . . ."

"*Hic finis fandi*," suggested Peters.

THE EXTRA HAND

H. M. TOMLINSON

OLD George Galsworthy and I sat on the headland above the estuary, looking into the vacancy which was the Atlantic on an entranced silver evening. The sky was overcast. There was no wind, and no direct sun. The light was refined and diffused through a thin veiling of pearl. Sea and sky were one.

As though they were suspended in space we saw a tug, having a barque in tow, far but distinct, in the light of the bay, tiny models of ebony set in a vast brightness. They were poised in the illumination, and seemed to be motionless, but we knew they were moving down on us. "Here she comes," said the seaman, "and a fine evening it is for the end of her last voyage." Shipbreakers had bought that barque. She was coming in to be destroyed.

The stillness of the world, and its lustre in which that fine black shape was centred and was moving to her end, made me feel that headlands, sea, and sky knew what was known to the two watchers on the hill. She was condemned. The ship was central, and the regarding world stood about her in silence. Sombre and stately she came, in the manner of the tragic proud, superior to the com-

elling fussiness of little men, making no resistance. The spring tide was near full. It had flooded the marsh lands below us, but not with water, for those irregular pools resplendent as mirrors were deeps of light. The hedgerows were strips of the earth's rind remaining above a profound. The light below the lines of black hedges was antipodean. The barque moved in slowly. She did not go past the lighthouse, and past our hill, into the harbour beyond, like a ship about the business of her life. She turned into the shadows below us, and stood towards the foot of the hill.

"She's altered a little," meditated Galsworthy. "They've shortened her sticks, those Norwegians, and painted her their beastly mustard colour and white. She's hogbacked, too. Well, she's old." The old man continued his quiet meditation. He was really talking to himself, I think, and I was listening to his thoughts.

"Look!" cried Galsworthy, suddenly rising, his hand gripping my shoulder. The tug had cast off and was going about. The ship came right on. There was an interval of time between her and the shore which was breathless and prolonged.

"She's aground!" exclaimed the old man to himself, and the hand on my shoulder gripped harder. He stood regarding her for some time. "She's done," he said, and presently released me, sitting down beside me again, still looking at her moodily, smoking his pipe. He was silent for a time. Perhaps he had in his mind that he, too, had taken the ground. It was sunset, and there she was, and there was he, and no more sparkling morning tides out of port for them any more.

Presently he turned to me. "There's a queer

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story about her. She carried an extra hand. I'll tell you. It's a queer yarn. She had one man at a muster more than signed for her. At night, you couldn't get into the rigging ahead of that chap. There you'd find him just too much ahead of the first lad who had jumped at the call to be properly seen, you know. You could see him, but you couldn't make him out. So the chap behind him was in no hurry, after the first rush. Well, it made it pretty hard for her old man to round up a crew. He had to find men who didn't know her. Men in Poplar who didn't know her, those days, were scarce. She was a London clipper, and she carried a famous flag. Everybody knew her but men who weren't sailors.

"Well, the boys said she had a bit of gibbet-post about her somewhere. Ah! maybe. I don't know. Anyway, I say she was a fine clipper. I knew her. She was the pick of the bunch, to my eye. But she was full of trouble. I must say that. When she was launched she killed a man. First she stuck on the ways, and then she went off all unexpected, like a bird. That was always a trick of hers. You never knew her. And when she was tired of headwinds, she'd find a dead calm. That was the kind of ship she was. A skipper would look at her, and swear she was the ship for him. The other chaps didn't understand her, he'd say. A ship like that's sure to be good, he'd tell you. But when he'd got her she'd turn his hair grey.

"One voyage she was six weeks beating to westward round Cape Horn. We had a bad time. I'd never seen such seas. We could do no good there. It was a voyage and a half. She lost the

second mate overboard, and she lost gear. So the old man put back to the Plate. And, of course, all her crowd deserted, to a man. They said they wanted to see their homes again before they died. They said there was something wrong about that ship, and they left all their truck aboard, and made themselves scarce. The old man scraped up a new crowd. They came aboard at dusk, one day, and they stared about them. 'Look, sir,' said one of them, 'what's that up there? What's that figgerhead in y'r main-to'-gallan' cross-tree?' I was the mate, you know. I talked to that chap. He learned something about getting the booze out of him before he came aboard. He got a move on.

"We were over four months making 'Frisco that voyage, and she the sailer she was. Why, she's logged thirteen knots. But she could get nothing right, not for long. She was like those fine-looking women men can't live without, and can't live with. She'd break a man's heart. When we got back to Blackwall we heard she was sold to foreigners . . . but there she is now, come home to die. I bet old Yeo don't care much about her troubles, though. He'll break her up, troubles and all, and she's for firewood . . . there you are, my dear, there you are . . . but you should have seen her at Blackwall, in the old days . . . what's the East India Dock Road like, these times?"

The next day, at low water, I stood beneath her, and watched a cascade pouring incessantly from a patched wound in her side, for she had been in collision, and that was why she was condemned. She was careened, like a slain thing, and with the

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dank rocks and weeds about, and that monotonous pour from her wound, she might have been a venerable sea monster from which the life was draining. Yeo hailed me from above, and up the lively rope ladder I went. She had a Norwegian name, but that was not her name. All Poplar knew her once. There she was born. She was one of ours. That stone arch of John Company, the entrance to the East India Dock, once framed her picture, and her topmasts looked down to the Dock Road, when she was at home. I could believe Galsworthy. She was not so empty as she seemed. She had a freight, and Yeo did not know it. Poplar and the days of the clippers! I knew she was invisibly peopled. Of course she was haunted.

The shipwrecker and I went about her canted decks, groped through dark recesses where it might have been the rats we heard, and peered into the sonorous gloom of the empty cargo spaces. In the cabins we puzzled over those relics left by her last crew, which, without their associations, seemed to have no reason in them. There was a mocking silence in the cabins. What sort of men were they who were familiar with these doors? And before the Northmen had her, and she was English, trim, and flew skysails and studding-sails, and carried lady passengers, who were the Poplar boys that laughed and yarned here? She was more mine than Yeo's. Let him claim her timber. All the rich freight of her past was mine. I was the intimate of every ghost she had.

We sat in a cabin which had been her skipper's. There was a litter on the floor of old newspapers

and documents, receipts for harbour dues, the captain's copies of bills of lading, store lists, and some picture postcards from the old man's family. A lump of indurated plum-duff, like a geological specimen, was on the table. There was a slant of sunshine through a square port window, and it rested on a decayed suit of oilskins. We sat silent, the shipbreaker having finished estimating to me, with enthusiasm, what she had of copper. He was now waiting for his men to return to work. They were going to take the masts out of her. But I was wondering what I could do to lay that ghost of my old shipping parish which this craft had conjured in my mind. And as we both sat there, looking at nothing, we heard, at the end of the alley-way, a door stealthily latch.

Yeo sprang to his feet at once, staring and listening. He looked at me, surprised and puzzled. "Of all the——" he began, and stopped. He took his seat again. "Why, of course," he said. "She's settling. That's what it is. She's settling. But my men, the fools, will have it there's some one pottering about this ship."

A MAN OF LETTERS

STACY AUMONIER

ALFRED CODLING TO ANNIE PHELPS

"MY DEAR ANNIE,

"I got into an awful funny mood lately. You'll think I'm barmy. It comes over me like late in the evenin when its gettin dusky. It started I think when I was in Egypt. Nearly all us chaps who was out there felt it a bit I think. When you was on sentry go in the dessert at night it was so quite and missterius. You felt you wanted to *know* things if you know what I mean. Since I've come back and settled in the saddlery again I still feel it most always. A kind of discontented funny feelin if you know what I mean. Well old girl what I mean is when we're spliced up and settled over in Tibbelsford I want to be good for you and I want to know all about things and that. Well I'm going to write to Mr. Weekes whose a gentleman and who lives in a private house near the church. They say he is a littery society and if it be so I'm on for joinin it. You'll think I'm barmy won't you. It isn't that old dear. Me that has always been content to do my job and draw my screw on Saturday and that. You'll think me funny. When you've lived in the dessert

Stacy Aumonier

you feel how old it all is. You want something and you don't know what it is praps its just to improve yourself and that. Anyway there it is and I'll shall writ to him. See you Sunday. So long, dear.

"ALF."

ALFRED CODLING TO JAMES WEEKES, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"Some one tell me you are a littery society in Tibbelsford. In which case may I offer my services as a member and believe me,

"Your obedient servant,

"ALFRED CODLING."

PENDRED CASTAWAY (SECRETARY TO JAMES WEEKES, ESQ.) TO ALFRED CODLING

"DEAR SIR,

"In reply to your letter of the 27th inst. I beg to inform you that Mr. James Weekes is abroad. I will communicate the contents of your letter to him.

"Yours faithfully,

"PENDRED CASTAWAY."

ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

"MY DEAR ALF,

"You are a dear old funny old bean. What is up with you. I expect you are just fed up. You

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haven't had another tutch of the fever have you. I will come and look after you Sunday. You are a silly to talk about improvin considerin the money you are gettin and another rise next spring you say. I expeck you got fed up in the dessert and that didn't you. I expeck you wantèd me sometimes, eh? I shouldn't think the littery society much cop myself. I can lend you some books. Cook is a great reader. She has nearly all Ethel M. Dells and most of Charles Garvice. She says she will lend you some if you promiss to cover in brown paper and not tare the edges. They had a big party here over the weekend a curnel a bishop two gentlemen and some smart women one very nice she gave me ten bob. We could go to the pictures come Wednesday if agreeable. Milly is walking out with a feller over at Spindlehurst in the grossery a bit flashy I don't like him much. Mrs. Vaughan had one of her attacks on Monday. Lord she does get on my nerves when she's like that. Well be good and cheerio must now close. Love and kisses till Sunday.

"ANNIE."

JAMES WEEKES, ESQ. (MALAGA, SPAIN) TO
ALFRED CODLING

"DEAR SIR,

"My secretary informs me that you wish to join our literary society in Tibbelsford. It is customary to be proposed and seconded by two members.

"Will you kindly send me your qualifications?

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES WEEKES."

Stacy Aumonier

ALFRED CODLING TO ANNIE PHELPS

"MY DEAR ANNIE,

"Please thank Cook for the two books which I am keepin rapt up and will not stain. I read the Eagles mate and think it is a pretty story. As you know dear I am no fist at explaining myself. At the pictures the other night you were on to me again about gettin on and that. It isn't that. Its difficul to explane what I mean. I expeck I will always be able to make good money enough. If you havent been throw it you cant know what its like. Its somethin else I want if you know what I mean. To be honest I did not like the picturs the other night. I thought they were silly but I like to have you sittin by me and holding your hand. If I could tell you what I mean you would know. I have heard from Mr. Weekes about the littery and am writin off at once. Steve our foreman has got sacked for pinchin lether been goin on for yeres so must close with love till Sunday.

"ALF."

ALFRED CODLING TO JAMES WEEKES, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"As regards your communication you ask what are my quallifications. I say I have no quallifications sir nevertheless I am wishful to join the littery. I will be candid with you sir. I am not what you might call a littery or eddicated man at all. I am in the saddlery. I was all

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throw Gallipoli and Egypt L corporal in the 2 15th Mounted Blumshires. It used to come over me like when I was out there alone in the dessert. Prehaps sir you will understand me when I say it for I find folks do not understand me about it not even the girl I walk out with Annie Phelps, who is a nice girl a feller could wish. Prehaps sir you have to have been throw it if you know what I mean. When you are alone at night in the dessert its all so big and quite you want to get to know things and all about things if you know what I mean sir so prehaps you will pass me in the littery.

"Your obedient servant,

"ALFRED CODLING."

ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

"DEAR ALF,

"You was funny Sunday. I don't know whats up with you. You never used to be that glum I call it. Is it thinking about this littery soc turnin your head or what. Millie says you come into the kitchen like a boiled owl you was. Cheer up ole dear till Sunday week.

"ANNIE."

JAMES WEEKES, ESQ., TO ALFRED CODLING

"DEAR SIR,

"Allow me to thank you for your charming letter. I feel that I understand your latent desires perfectly. I shall be returning to Tibbelsford in a week's time, when I hope to make your acquaint-

Stacy Aumonier

ance. I feel sure that you will make a desirable member of our literary society.

"Yours cordially,

"JAMES WEEKES."

JAMES WEEKES TO SAMUEL CHILDERS

"MY DEAR SAM,

"I received the enclosed letter yesterday and I hasten to send it on to you. Did you ever read anything more delightful? We must certainly get Alfred Codling into our society. He sounds the kind of person who would make a splendid foil to old Baldwin with his tortuous metaphysics—that is, if we can only get him to talk.

"Yours ever,

"J. W."

SAMUEL CHILDERS TO JAMES WEEKES

"MY DEAR CHAP,

"You are surely not serious about the ex-corporal! I showed his letter to Fanny. She simply screamed with laughter. But of course you mean it as a joke proposing him for the 'littery.' Hope to see you on Friday.

"Ever yours,
"S. C."

ALFRED CODLING TO ANNIE PHELPS

"MY DEAR ANNIE,

"I was afraid you would begin to think I was barmy dear I always said so but you musnt

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take it like that. It is difficult to tell you about but you know my feelins to you is as always. Now I have to tell you dear that I have seen Mr. Weekes he is a very nice old gentleman indeed he is very kind he says I can go to his hous any time and read his books he has hundreds and hundreds. I have nevver seen so many books you have to have a ladder to clime up to some of them he is very kind he says he shall propose me for the littery soc and I can go when I like he ast me all about mysel and that was very kind and pleasant he told me all about what books I was to read and that so I think dear I wont be goin to the picturs Wendesday but will meet you by the Fire stasion Sunday as usual.

“Your lovin

“ALF.”

EPHRAIM BALDWIN TO JAMES WEEKES

“MY DEAR WEEKES,

“I’m afraid I cannot understand your attitude in proposing and getting Childers to second this hobbledehoy called Alfred Codling. I have spoken to him and I am quite willing to acknowledge that he may be a very good young man in his place. But why join a literary society? Surely we want to raise the intellectual standard of the society, not lower it? He is absolutely ignorant. He knows nothing at all. Our papers and discussions will be Greek to him. If you wanted an extra hand in your stables or a jobbing gardener well and good, but I must sincerely

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protest against this abuse of the fundamental purposes of our society.

"Yours sincerely,

"EPHRAIM BALDWIN."

FANNY CHILDERS TO ELSPETH PRITCHARD

"DEAR OLD THING,

"I must tell you about a perfect scream that is happening here. You know the Tibbelsford literary society that Pa belongs to, and also Jimmy Weekes? Well, it's like this. Dear old Jimmy is always doing something eccentric. The latest thing is he has discovered a mechanic in the leather trade with a soul! (I'm not sure I ought not to spell it the other way.) He is also an ex-soldier and was out in the East. He seems to have become imbued with what they called 'Eastern romanticism.' Anyway, he wanted to join the Society, and old Weekes rushed Pa into seconding him, and they got him through. And now a lot of the others are up in arms about it—especially old Baldwin—you know, we call him 'Permanganate of Potash.' If you saw him you'd know why, but I can't tell you. I have been to two of the meetings specially to observe the mechanic with the soul. He is really quite a dear. A thick-set, square-chinned little man with enormous hands with a heavy silver ring on the third finger of his left, and tattoo marks on his right wrist. He sits there with his hands spread out on his knees and stares round at the members as though he thinks they are a lot of lunatics. The first evening he came the paper was on 'The

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influence of Erasmus on modern theology,' and the second evening 'The drama of the Restoration.' No wonder the poor soul looks bewildered. He never says a word. How is Tiny? I was in town on Thursday and got a duck of a hat. Do come over soon.

"Crowds of love,
"FAN."

JAMES WEEKES TO ALFRED CODLING

"MY DEAR CODLING,

"I quite appreciate your difficulty. I would suggest that you read the following books in the order named. You will find them in my library:

Jevon's *Primer of Logic*.

Welton's *Manual of Logic*.

Brackenbury's *Primer of Psychology*, and
Professor James' *Text Book of Psychology*.

Do not be discouraged!

"Sincerely yours,
"JAMES WEEKES."

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ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

"DEAR ALF,

"I don't think you treat me quite fare You says you are sweet on me and that and then you go on in this funny way It isnt my falt that you got the wind up in Egypt I don't know what you mean by all this I wish the ole littery soc was dead and finish. Cook say you probibly want a blue

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pill you was so glum Sunday. Dont you see all these gents and girls and edicated coves are pullin youre leg if you dont know what they talkin about and that Your just makin a fule of yourself and then what about me you dont think of me its makin me a fule too. Milly says *she* wouldnt have no truck with a book lowse so there it is.

"ANNIE."

ALFRED CODLING TO JAMES WEEKES, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am much oblided to you for puttin me on them books It beats me how they work up these things. I'm afeard I'm not scollard enough to keep the pace with these sayins and that. Its the same with the littery I lissen to the talk and sometimes I think I've got it and then no Sometimes I feels angry with the things said I know the speakers wrong but I can't say I feel they wrong but I don't know what to say to say it. Theres some things to big to say isnt that sir. Im much oblided to you sir for what you done Beleive me I enjoy the littery altho I most always dont know the talk I know who are the rite ones and who are the rong ones. If you have been throw what I have been throw you would know the same sir Beleive me your

"obedient servant

"ALFRED CODLING."

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EPHRAIM BALDWIN TO EDWIN JOPE, SECRETARY
TO THE TIBBELSFORD LITERARY SOCIETY

"DEAR JOPE,

"For my paper on the 19th prox. I propose to discuss 'The influence of Hegelism on modern psychology.'

"Yours ever,

"EPHRAIM BALDWIN."

EDWIN JOPE TO EPHRAIM BALDWIN

"DEAR MR. BALDWIN,

"I have issued the notices of your forthcoming paper. The subject, I am sure, will make a great appeal to our members, and I feel convinced that we are in for an illuminating and informative evening. With regard to our little conversation on Wednesday last, I am entirely in agreement with you with regard to the quite inexplicable action of Weekes in introducing the 'leather mechanic' into the society. It appears to me a quite superfluous effrontery to put upon our members. We do not want to lose Weekes, but I feel that he ought to be asked to give some explanation of his conduct. As you remark, it lowers the whole standard of the society. We might as well admit agricultural labourers, burglars, grooms and barmaids, and the derelicts of the town. I shall sound the opinion privately of other members.

"With kind regards,

"Yours sincerely,

"EDWIN JOPE."

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ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

" All right then you stick to your old littery. I am sendin you back your weddin ring you go in and out of that place nevvver thinkin of me Aunt siad how it would be you goin off and cetterer and gettin ideas into your head what do you care. I doant think you care at all I expeck you meet a lot of these swell heads there men *and women* and you get talkin and thinkin you some one. All these years you away I wated for you faithfull I never had a thowt for other fellers and then you go on like this and treat me in this way Aunt says she wouldnt put up and Milly says a book lowse is worse than no good and so I say goodby and thats how it is now forever. You have broken my hart

" ANNE."

ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

" I cried all nite I didndt mean quite all I says you know how I mene dear Alf if you was only reesonible I doant mind you goin the littery if you eggsplain yourself For Gawds sake meet me tonight by the fire stachon and eggsplain every-thing.

" Your broke hearted

" ANNE."

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JAMES WEEKES TO SAMUEL CHILDERS

"MY DEAR SAM,

"I hope Harrogate is having the desired effect upon you. I was about to say that you have missed few events of any value or interest during your absence, but I feel I must qualify that statement. You have missed a golden moment. The great Baldwin evening has come and gone, and I deplore the fact that you were not there. My sense of gratification, however, is not due to Ephraim himself but to my unpopular protégé and white elephant—Alfred Codling. I tell you it was glorious! Ephraim spoke for an hour and a half, the usual thing, a dull *réchauffée* of Schopenhauer and Hegel, droning forth platitudes and half-baked sophistries. When it was finished the chairman asked if any one else wished to speak. To my amazement my ex-lance-corporal rose heavily to his feet. His face was brick red and his eyes glowed with anger. He pointed his big fingers at Ephraim and exclaimed: 'Yes, talk, talk, talk—that's all it is. There's nothing in it at all!' and he hobbled out of the room (you know he was wounded in the right foot). The position, as you may imagine, was a little trying. I did not feel in the mood to stay and make apologies. I hurried after Codling. I caught him up at the end of the lane. I said, 'Codling, why did you do that?' He could not speak for a long time, then he said: 'I'm sorry, sir. It came over me like, all of a sudden.' We walked on. At the corner by Harvey's mill we met a girl. Her face was wet—there was a fine rain pouring at the time. They

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looked at each other these two, then she suddenly threw out her arms and buried her face on his chest. I realized that this was no place for me and I hurried on. The following morning I received the enclosed letter. Please return it to me.

"Yours ever,

"JAMES."

ALFRED CODLING TO JAMES WEEKES

"DEAR SIR,

"Please to irrase my name from the littery soc. I feel I have treated you bad about it but there it is. I apologise to you for treatin you bad like this that is all I regret You have always been kind and pleasant to me lendin me the books and that. I shall always be grateful to you for what you have done. It all came over me sudden like last night while that chap was spoutin out about what you call *physology*. I had never heard tell on the word till you put me on to it and now they all talk about it. I looked it up in the diction and it says somethin about the science of mind and that chap went on spoutin about it. I had quarrel with my girl we had nevver quarrel before and I was very down abowt it. She is the best girl a feller could wish and I have always said so. Somehow last night while he was spoutin on it came over me sudden I thowt of the nights I had spent alone in the dessert when it was all quite and missterous and big. I had been throw it all sir. I had seen my pals what was alive one minnit blown to pieces the next. I had tramped hundreds

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of miles and gone without food and watter. I had seen hell itsel sir. And when you are always with death like that sir you are always so much alive. You are alive and then the next minnit you may be dead and it makes you want to feel in touch like with everythin. You cant hate no one when you like that. You think of the other feller over there whose thinkin like you are prehaps and he all alone to lookin up the blinkin stars and it comes over you that its only love that holds us all together love and nothin else at all My hart was breakin thinkin of Annie what I had treated so bad and what I had been throw and he went on spoutin and spoutin. What does he know about *physology*. You have to had been very near death to find the big things thats what I found out and I couldnt tell these littery blokes that thats why I lost my temper and so please to irrase me from the soc. They cant teach me nothen that matters I've seen it all and I cant teach them nothen because they havent been throw it What I have larnt is sir that theres somethin big in our lives apart from getting on and comfits and good times and so sir I am much oblidged for all you done for me and except my appology for the way I treat you

" Your obedient servant,

" ALFRED CODLING."

JAMES WEEKES TO EDWIN JOPE

" DEAR JOPE,

" In reply to your letter, I cannot see my way to apologise or even dissociate myself from

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the views expressed by Mr. Alfred Codling at our last meeting, consequently I must ask you to accept my resignation.

"Yours very truly,

"JAMES WEEKES."

SAMUEL CHILDERS TO EDWIN JOPE

"DEAR JOPE,

"Taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case, I must ask you to accept my resignation from the Tibbelsford Literary Society.

"Yours faithfully,

"S. CHILDERS."

ANNIE PHELPS TO ALFRED CODLING

"MY DEAR ALF,

"Of course its all right. I am all right now dear Alf. I will try and be a good wife to you. I amnt clever like you with all your big thowts and that but I will and be a good wife to you. Aunt Em is goin to give us that horses-hair and mother says therell be tweanty-five pounds comin to me when Uncle Steve pegs out and he has the dropsie all right already. What do you say to Aperil if we can git that cottidge of Mrs. Plummers mothers. See you Sunday

"love from

"ANNIE."

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EPHRAIM BALDWIN TO EDWIN JOPE

"DEAR MR. JOPE,

"As no apology has been forthcoming to me *from any quarter* for the outrageous insult I was subjected to on the occasion of my last paper, I must ask you to accept my resignation.

"Yours faithfully,

"EPHRAIM BALDWIN, O.B.E."

ALFRED CODLING TO ANNIE PHELPS

"MY DEAR ANNE,

"You will be please to hear they made me foreman this will mean an increas and so on I think April will be alright Mr. Weekes sent me check for fifty pounds to start farnishin but I took it back I said no I could not accep it having done nothin to earn it and treatin him so bad over that littery soc but he said yes and he put it in such a way that I accep after all so we shall be alright for farnishin at the present. He was very kind and he says we was to go to him at any time and I was to go on reading the books he says I shall find good things in them but not the littery soc he says he has left it hisself I feel I treated him very bad but I could not stand that feller spoutin and him nevver havin been throw it like what I have. That dog of Charly's killed one of Mrs. Reeves chickens Monday so must now close till Sunday with love from

"Your soon husband (dont it sound funny?)

"ALF."

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EDWIN JOPE TO WALTER BUNNING

"DEAR SIR,

"In reply to your letter I beg to say that
the Tibbelsford Literary Society is dissolved.

"Yours faithfully,

"E. JOPE."

A DAUGHTER OF RAMESES

LORD DUNSANY

THERE are days when the atmosphere is over heavy. It weighs down on us and our spirits wilt beneath it. It is not the fault of our philosophy; it is merely that we are not built to support the awful weight of the air, if it stir the least with Earth's sleep and lie any heavier on us than with the old weight we are used to. I remember one day walking to the club full of oppression and weariness, arising as I thought at the time from perplexities in the affairs of the human race; and I should have looked for a larger source, for a flash of lightning going like a ragged tear through the sky soon showed me that my sense of troubles afoot came from Earth's impending effort to hurl off some of the electricity that in some way was irking or menacing her. But I reached the club before that flash of lightning, so that I did not know as yet what was weighing upon my spirit. So, instead of looking at the barometer to see what was really the matter, I sought the palliative nearest to hand by remarking to Jorkens, who was sitting heavily there amongst silent members, "What is the strangest thing you've ever seen?" For, whether you believe Jorkens or not, he always distracts my attention from other things.

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There are those at the club that do not always care to listen to Jorkens talking for any length of time, but to-day if any wished to make a protest they seemed too inert to do so ; and Jorkens began thus : " Well, it's hard to say. You know what I mean : it's just the way things happen : sometimes one way, sometimes another. It's just the way it takes you, if you follow me. It's pretty much the same whichever way you look at it. It's the same old thing, you know, day after day. But what I really mean to say is that it all depends on the way you look at it. It's what you might call, well, I don't really know how to put it ; but you know what I mean. Well, it all seems to me very simple, but I can't quite make it out : nobody could, the way things are going nowadays. I mean that's just the way things are : that's pretty well the long and the short of it, and one must make the best of it, so to speak. Don't you agree with me ? "

" Waiter," I called, " a large whisky for Mr. Jorkens."

He turned at once and went for it.

" Jorkens," I said, " pull yourself together."

" Don't see much to pull myself together about," muttered Jorkens.

And then the gleaming glass came near, a quarter full of what looked like liquid sunshine, in the room already darkening with the thunder-storm that was to come. Jorkens looked gloomily at it, added a little water, and drank it without a word ; and for several seconds afterwards still clung to his gloom.

Then he turned a quick glance upon me, and asked : " What were you saying ? "

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"The strangest thing you have ever seen," I said.

"The strangest?" said Jorkens. "If you'd asked me the most interesting, or the most exciting; but the strangest. I think the strangest thing that I ever saw was a princess's coffin in the Cairo museum; on a shelf at the end of a room, the same room in which they put Tutankh-Amen's relics later. What they had in the coffin, and the princess herself, and her astounding point of view—which I came on later—were, taken together, the most extraordinary thing I've ever come across. Quite the most extraordinary.

"To begin with the coffin contained only rags, never had contained anything else. That was odd enough to begin with; so odd that I determined to find out how they ever got the idea of burying rags in a sepulchre worth half a million; for they'd found enough gold in the tomb to have made a motor-car out of. They'd dug it up at the foot of a barren mountain above Luxor, a mile or so from the Nile. They told me the dynasty, which I forget; and that was all that I could find out about it. And I asked men who knew; knew all about Egyptology, and all about that dynasty; but they could tell me nothing more about the bundle of rags in the coffin in the golden sarcophagus.

"Well, there was a man called Sindey who was the last word about that sort of thing, and I used to bother him about it, because I felt that it was a thing they ought to know; and the less they told me the more my curiosity grew. And when I found they'd no record whatever about the rags in the coffin I said to Sindey one day: 'Can you

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find no legend about it among the people of Egypt ? ’

“ ‘ No,’ he said.

“ ‘ Have you tried ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ It’s no good,’ he said. ‘ Their only interests are in Islam and modern Egypt ; they remember nothing of ancient Egypt ; there is not one legend in all the land from those days.’

“ ‘ None ? ’ I said.

“ ‘ No, not one,’ he repeated. And then he added : ‘ There is an Arab ; but you know what Arabs are ; and he’s not quite reliable ; and I shouldn’t recommend him to you. Besides, what he goes in for is not strictly legal. Such practices may have all died out in England, but the laws against them are still on the statute book.’

“ ‘ What ? Fortune-telling ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Worse than that, I’m afraid,’ he answered

“ ‘ But I would not be put off, and I asked for the Arab’s name.

“ ‘ Well, he calls himself Abdul Eblis,’ said Sindey.

“ ‘ And where does he live ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ That one doesn’t quite know,’ said Sindey, ‘ but one can usually find him hanging about the Sphinx. He really isn’t quite the kind of man . . . ’

“ ‘ But I cut all that, and got Sindey’s promise to bring Abdul Eblis to me, and made him keep to his promise. And so I met that Arab ; tall, straight, sixty, a pointed beard, shrouded with the usual burnous that had once been white, and eyes that, whatever they could see, at any rate pretended to look through you, to your destiny brooding beyond. ‘ This is Abdul Eblis,’ said

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Sindey, with a wave of his hand, and showing by tone and gesture that he wished to have nothing to do with him.

"I went at once to the point. 'There's something I want you to tell me,' I said to Abdul Eblis.

"Equally to the point was the Arab.

"'Past or future?' he said.

"'Long past,' I answered.

"'It is there,' said Abdul Eblis.

"I don't know quite what he meant, but I understood at the time that whatever had happened, or however long ago, the deed rested somewhere and could be revealed by him. Whatever he meant I told him what I wanted, and he nodded and nodded his head at every sentence, till I had the feeling that I was asking nothing extravagant. Sindey had gone away and left me by then.

"And Abdul Eblis took me round to the other side of the Sphinx, and pointed to the ground where her paws were, and said: 'Meet me here, and I will show you.'

"And I had the idea at once that he meant by night, as otherwise he might have started immediately; at least that's the logical reason for supposing so; but it wasn't my real reason, which was simply that night, and night alone, appeared appropriate to the air he wore. And I said: 'I will come to-night.' And he said: 'No, not now: the moon is full: and there will be tourists here. Come in four nights from now, four nights after this one.'

"One thing that gave me confidence in the man was that he made no effort to bargain, no

mention of money ; and when I mentioned it he merely told me to wait, and then to pay him what I thought, when he had shown me what he would show.

“ I was staying at an hotel near the Pyramids ; indeed the district is now named after the hotel, and is called Gizeh no longer ; one speaks of the Pyramids as being near the hotel, and not the other way round : I suppose such changes overtake everything. Well, I was staying there and sitting in the garden, looking towards the Sphinx when the appointed night came round ; I was looking in the darkness towards the Sphinx, but of course the Sphinx was invisible ; nothing but stars were in sight, and I was waiting there for the Arab. He was to come at ten o'clock, as I understood the appointment, but it was perfectly clear to me that he was very vague about time. Ten came, and half-past ten, and there was nothing to do but wait, for there was no way of finding him if he did not come. Jazz was new in those days, and some one with a gramophone in the hotel behind me was turning the silence to chaos. In the desert a wind that had arisen with night was whispering in gusts to the silence, and after every gust the silence answered. One might guess what the wind said, that old traveller that had seen so many cities, that had traversed or rested upon so many lands ; one's fancy might overtake now and then the tail end of one of his stories ; but what wisdom the desert revealed by its hush there is no way of guessing. You must be a prophet before you can speak with the desert. I never could do it. I knew there was something there, some terrible wisdom that went

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past my hearing and sight, and away beyond me and was utterly lost. Utterly lost. Waiter, another whisky.

"Well, I was sitting there blind and deaf to the desert; the wind had sunk, and there was nothing but that huge silence, and it was past eleven o'clock. The noise on the gramophone had long since ceased, and the lights of the hotel windows were going out one by one, and nothing was stirring. And then I saw the shape of Abdul Eblis making a blackness quite near me. I never saw him come, but he was standing there beckoning to me, with a finger up close to his face, too furtive even to beckon as Arabs usually do, with a sweep of the whole arm downwards.

" 'Abdul Eblis,' I exclaimed.

"But Abdul Eblis moved his hand to his lip, and turned and led the way, and I followed him silently to the feet of the Sphinx.

"And there he sat down and waved me back with his arm, till I was standing some ten or fifteen yards in front of him, and the Sphinx towered behind.

"And then he made a circle with something on the sand, some powder as I supposed; and lit it, and it burned slowly; and presently the flame was going away from him, on both sides round the circle, burning a pale blue. It turned the Arab's face a hideous colour, and lit up every wrinkle in it, illuminating his expression with such astonishing clarity that you could see the changing of his thoughts behind it, whatever his thoughts were. The flame grew taller and lit the eyes of the Sphinx, showing the battered features that have looked in the face of Time. And as

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the light played over the lips and the hollows, and the shadows danced from their crannies and streamed up into the night, the veteran monster unmistakably smiled

" You would think from the number of people that go to see that smile, when Arabs light for them a bit of magnesium wire, you would think that there was something friendly in it, at least some message for us. Not a bit of it. There was only in that smile the contempt of the ages for what passes swiftly away.

" Somehow it riveted me, that enormous contempt, stored there I suppose for ages, hidden in those wrinkles, growing a little in power every century, and released by the careless matches of wondering trippers to sear their souls by its scrutiny. No, it's better not to make gods or demons smile: they don't laugh at the same jokes as us.

" It took a drink or two after that, and pretty stiff ones, to get back my self-respect ; and even they didn't do it entirely : you never know where you are with those immortal things.

" Well, I was watching the flickering smiles of that immense contempt, unable to get my thoughts away from the grip of it, when a figure came fluttering out from between its paws behind the circle of fire, and right through the blue flames, which died as the figure touched them, and turned into grey smoke. So real was the figure of that Egyptian lady that walked five paces towards me and stopped in the smoke, that had it not been for her extraordinary point of view, so utterly remote from this age, I should have believed that the whole apparition was just a trick of the Arab.

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" Abdul Eblis rose and moved till he stood beside her, then made his salaam ; and she spoke to him in I know not what language. He turned his head toward me and translated. She says, ' What do you want now, Abdul Eblis ? '

" It was a time to ask for wonders.

" ' Ask her to speak in English,' I said.

" ' In English, please, Illustrious,' said Abdul Eblis to her.

" She sighed shortly, as though compelled by something vexatious and overwhelming.

" ' And then ? ' she asked.

" ' Your coffin, Illustrious,' said Abdul Eblis, ' that had only old rags in it.'

" She laughed merrily at that, and her laughter trilled away over the empty desert, empty but for the vastest monument mankind ever erected, away and away toward the Mokattan hills, until remote jackals heard it and passed the wild cry on.

" ' I had to have a funeral,' she explained.

" ' Aye,' said the Arab. ' Even so all of us.'

" ' But I wished to live,' said she.

" ' Ask her to tell us how it was,' I said.

" ' Tell us, Illustrious,' said the Arab, bowing towards her.

" ' It was the sunsets,' she said, ' the gold Egyptian sunsets ; the glow behind western hills, and the wild pipes of Porásthenees. I heard them first one evening under that golden sky. One star was faintly shining in the green of the sky, between sunset and night. And little winds were roaming through the evening and cooling Egypt, slipping unseen along the darkening hills like the gods, who also walk at this hour. I knew a priest who had

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seen them. At any other hour I could have disdained those pipes, however haunting their melody ; for Porásthenees was only a goat-herd. But at that hour, under those sunsets, when men are helpless before the gods and music and love, I had no choice, whoever blew those pipes ; and I thought at first that it was one of the gods ; but it was no matter who blew them at that hour. And one evening I went to the hills and found it was only a goat-herd, but it was too late then ; god or man it was all the same. Over a ridge of those hills I went through the glow of that haunted evening, all tremulous with the tune of the pipes, and magical with the sunset. All trembling I went to find out the mystery of the music ; and found in a hollow over the hill my young goat-herd lover, Porásthenees. When he saw who it was that had come to the sound of his pipes he gazed but he did not speak ; and I, when I saw that it was no god, said never a word, for no other roaming the hills could have right of speech with me. And there we stood looking long in each other's eyes as the twilight faded away. But the light never faded out of Porásthenees' eyes, though the stars came out and were jealous, if it be possible for immortal spirits to be jealous of earthly eyes. They teach that it is not possible, yet on that night only I believe that they were. Emboldened by some vast folly he dared to sigh, but I uttered no sigh in answer ; though my heart should break for it I would not sigh. Then I saw the lanterns of the men of my father, he who was none other than Rameses, coming near, searching. And I deemed it a pity that they should kill Porásthenees, even though he had dared to sigh.

A Daughter of Rameses

So I gazed into his eyes long without ever blinking, then turned and ran ; and they found me far from Porásthenees. And when I returned he was wroth, who was none other than Rameses. But I knew that his wrath would pass : is not the sun often darkened with raging clouds ? They go by, and the rays are bright again. Many had noticed my father's resemblance to the sun, and had been greatly struck by it.

“ ‘ Again I went to the green hills at evening, as their greenness was growing dim, and the sunset burned like flames in a golden land ; so near to us, yet untrodden by earthly feet ; for only the gods walk at evening in the golden fields of the sunset, its colours tinting their feet with splendours not for Earth's people. I went to the sound of the pipes of reed, that were luring my spirit to fly through the hush of the dusk. What could my feet do but follow ? For every man and woman has a spirit, which does not die when they embalm the body, but is an immortal thing. So away I went to the green hills in the hush, and came over the ridge to the hollow ; and there was Porásthenees among his goats in the dusk, playing upon his pipes, and the afterglow over his head turning from glory to glory. And he laid down his pipes and we gazed again at each other, and still we did not speak. Oh, the eyes of Porásthenees ; I could not put away the thought of them. All night I pictured them shining, all day they seemed glittering so close that almost another could see them. And sometimes there were those about the Court that looked at me in such a way that I was sure they knew that his eyes were shining near me, though he was far afield, and

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over the western hills that look on Nile Only he still saw nothing, who was none other than Rameses. Once he said I was moody, and I said I was ; but of Porásthenees he guessed nothing.

“ ‘ Often we met again but never spoke, and my love for Porásthenees came between me and sleep.’

“ So faintly she sighed a helpless sigh standing there veiled in smoke, that one could scarcely tell if it were she that sighed, or if a lost wind wandering through the desert had breathed its last breath out by the Arab’s curious fire. And at once I wanted to help her, for her sigh being there beside me, I forgot that her trouble was from thousands of years ago. And how could I help her ? There seemed only one remedy. And for that my advice came thousands of years too late. ‘ Could you not marry Porásthenees ? ’ I said.

“ Late or not my advice, she turned at once from her sigh to merriest trills of laughter. ‘ And one of the House of Egypt marry a goat-herd ? ’ she said. ‘ What whimsies have come to the world ? Who has heard of such a fancy ? What merriment has moved you to such a conceit ? Who has designed so strange a quip in these years wherein I now wander ? Is it not death to jest so strangely, as it would have been surely of old ? Yet jest unto me as you will, for I always loved quaint absurdities. And indeed none ever before . . . ’ And her words turned all to laughter, which trilled away and away over the sand through the silence.

“ I gazed at her, so far as I could see her form in the dimness, and draped as it was with smoke ; and when her laughter quieted I was still gazing

A Daughter of Rameses

in wonder. And she had not yet done with her point of view that she was expressing so vehemently ; for as soon as her laughter gave her breath for speech she was talking of it still, and still with that mirthful incredulity, as though she could not believe that my words were real.

“ ‘ Do the sun or the moon mate with slugs or beetles ? ’ she asked. For a moment her merriment turned nearly to indignation, and then she laughed again, but this time shorter and more contemptuously, and I saw that I could not press the point. So I remained silent till her laughter had wholly ceased, and she was sighing once more, remembering Porásthenees. It was hard to sympathize with the pig-headed young fool ; and yet I did sympathize, for, with all the folly of her point of view, those sighs of hers were coming from a heart bewildered and broken, by a sorrow whose memory had lasted for thousands and thousands of years. And it had only been a brief sorrow. It cannot have been for more than a few weeks, and then it had all ended happily. But she was a creature of moods ; you could see that ; and they had probably encouraged every one of them in that palace of theirs on the Nile when the hills were green. So it was enough for her to remember her one real sorrow for her to waft these sighs at the very face of the Sphinx, whose ancient calm meant nothing to her. And in that calm that the Sphinx has imposed on that one spot of earth for all those ages and ages, I heard her excitable story.

“ ‘ I saw soon that I should die of love,’ she said. ‘ And I thought of leaving the sacred land and the temples, and the river that the gods have

given to water Egypt. And of these things I thought for the first time ; yet, though they came newly to me in all their sadness, they troubled me little, sad though it be to leave the land that the gods walked often. And then there came among my thoughts that were all of Porásthenees, one dark thought telling me that if I died I should hear his reed-pipes no longer, stirring the golden evening. I should see his eyes no longer, shining when all else darkened. I should go to him no more across the ridge of the hills

“ ‘ Then said I, how much better to die and still see Porásthenees : the Court of Rameses fading , the priests adoring the gods, the fans of my hand-maidens, even the glorious face of my father, all passing away from me ; and still the pipes of Porásthenees haunting the darkening hills. Still the pipes of Porásthenees, and I hearing them still, although my funeral should have gone over the river. That was my thought, and at once I made my plan. That is all. I have told you.’ ”

“ ‘ And then,’ I said, ‘ Illustrious ? ’ Picking up the mode of address from Abdul Eblis.

“ ‘ And then,’ she said, ‘ I went to the High Priest. I found him sacrificing in the temple of Thoth, and brought him away from the sacrifice, and to a place apart among palms where we could speak privately. And he asked me what I would with him, and I said to him, “ Comrade of the gods, how many ways of death are there ? ” And the High Priest answered, “ A hundred.” For I spoke of ritual things, to which there was one answer. Then I said, “ And the hundred and first ? ” ’ ”

“ ‘ And he answered, “ The will of the King.” ’ ”

A Daughter of Rameses

That also is in writing on ancient parchment : there is but one answer.

“ “ “ And for a priest how many ? ” I said. And he was silent awhile. And then he answered me, saying, “ Perhaps three.”

“ “ “ And the fourth ? ” I said. And this I knew he must answer. And answer he did, but grudgingly, saying, “ The will of the King, if he hates the gods.”

“ “ “ He loves his daughter,” I said. And the High Priest was silent.

“ “ “ You must make a mirage funeral,” I said. He knew what I meant. The image of things that are not, the mockery of the desert beyond the hills. Neither by word nor sign did he show that he understood me, nor yet that he did not. But he answered me. “ It could be done,” he said.

“ “ “ It is well,” said I.

“ “ “ We walked in silence then, he saying no more, so that if need be he still could say he had misunderstood my meaning. And after we had walked by twenty palm trees he spoke again and said, “ Whose ? ”

“ “ “ And I said, “ Mine.”

“ “ “ And he said, “ The funeral of one of the House of Egypt ! That would most gravely shock the gods.”

“ “ “ Those days are so engraven upon my spirit that every word from them sings in my memory, like immortal birds, to this day.

“ “ “ And I said to the High Priest, “ You will not do this for me ? ”

“ “ “ And he answered me, “ No.”

“ “ “ Then I said to him, speaking softly, I almost whispered, so softly he hardly heard——’ And

her voice after all those years spoke low with the memory, and the flutter of little winds that stir the surface of sand rose louder than that faint voice, and her words were lost in it.

“ ‘What did you say to him, Illustrious?’ I asked her.

“ ‘I said, “It is death,” ’ she answered.

“ ‘Why so softly?’ I asked her

“ ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘it is terrible to speak of the death of a priest. He looked at me and said, “What?” And I answered, “Death.” And he looked at me to see if I would take back my word, or faint, or cry out for pardon. Our house and his, there were only two that ruled Egypt. Generations of us had not his wisdom, nor a hundred of him our strength. He looked into my very spirit in those moments; and, when he saw that I would not go back, he bowed. And then we fixed a day for my mirage funeral

“ ‘It was a lovely funeral. It went at dawn from the palace down to the calm river, the holy Nile that the gods have given to water Egypt. It went with plumes and music, and a great concourse. And he was there who was none other than Rameses, riding a white horse. And the sun came over the eastern hills as the catafalque reached the water, and the rays flashed on the gold, and a flood of gold by the boat shone back from the holy river. And the rowers pushed off the boat to the jewel-like Nile in the morning. And Porásthenees stood beside me in the hollow of the hills that we knew, both peering over the ridge at the lovely funeral, listening to the music of the players and then the horns of the priests. He tried to speak to me, but I would have none

A Daughter of Rameses

of it, till the boat touched the far bank, and the priests lifted up the gold-bound horns of great antelopes and blew for the third time. And even then I waited till one horn wailing blew from the winding end of the rocky valley, announcing to Egypt that I was laid away in the sight of Anubis and Horus and Thoth, in the keeping of those that watch for century after century, closing no eye for rest at night nor blinking at full noon.

"I was nothing then; I spoke with Porás-thenees, and he with me. We went away that day to his house of reeds, he playing his pipes along the hills as we went, the pipes that had lured my spirit or ever they drew my feet. The house of reeds beyond the back of the hills, for many a year I tended it. It lay out of the way of roads, away from hamlets, among little fields that were home. Even the seasons loved it, passing by, each one of them decking it with some of their splendour. Was ever a home more loved?"

"I wanted to get her amazing point of view, and knew that it still baffled me. It was that that drove me to interrupt her, as she stood there turning over and over old memories.

"'Did you marry the goat-herd?' I blurted out.

"'Why, yes,' she said, as though astonished at my simplicity, she that had said the sun did not mate with beetles or slugs. And then she seemed to correct herself 'He married me,' she added. 'It was good and kind of Porás-thenees. For I was nothing. I was homeless and nameless. In the sight of the gods I was no one. He might have treated me as the night-wind that goes up and down through the barley,

Lord Dunsany

or the echo of voices of jackals, or as old legends or dreams ; and I could not have complained. Before Anubis, Horus, and Thoth I had neither name nor breath.'

" 'But you were still of the House of Egypt ? ' I tried to argue.

" But she only repeated that she was nothing before Anubis, Horus, and Thoth, and began to quote from papyrus stored by the priests in the royal vaults of her father ; and repeating, ' Nothing, nothing, ' she moved slowly backwards a little, and meeting then with one of those wandering winds that stray at night in all deserts, she went away with the wind."

BANK HOLIDAY

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

A STOUT man with a pink face wears dingy white flannel trousers, a blue coat with a pink handkerchief showing, and a straw hat much too small for him, perched at the back of his head. He plays the guitar. A little chap in white canvas shoes, his face hidden under a felt hat like a broken wing, breathes into a flute; and a tall thin fellow, with bursting over-ripe button boots, draws ribbons—long, twisted, streaming ribbons—of tune out of a fiddle. They stand, unsmiling, but not serious, in the broad sunlight opposite the fruit shop; the pink spider of a hand beats the guitar, the little squat hand, with a brass-and-turquoise ring, forces the reluctant flute, and the fiddler's arm tries to saw the fiddle in two.

A crowd collects, eating oranges and bananas, tearing off the skins, dividing, sharing. One young girl has even a basket of strawberries, but she does not eat them. "Aren't they *dear*!" She stares at the tiny pointed fruits as if she were afraid of them. The Australian soldier laughs. "Here, go on, there's not more than a mouthful." But he doesn't want her to eat them either. He likes to watch her little frightened face, and her puzzled eyes lifted to his: "Aren't they a *price*!"

Katherine Mansfield

He pushes out his chest and grins. Old fat women in velvet bodices—old dusty pin-cushions—lean old hags like worn umbrellas with a quivering bonnet on top; young women, in muslins, with hats that might have grown on hedges, and high pointed shoes; men in khaki, sailors, shabby clerks, young Jews in fine cloth suits with padded shoulders and wide trousers, “hospital boys” in blue—the sun discovers them—the loud, bold music holds them together in one big knot for a moment. The young ones are larking, pushing each other on and off the pavement, dodging, nudging; the old ones are talking: “So I said to ‘im, if you wants the doctor to yourself, fetch ‘im, says I.”

“An’ by the time they was cooked there wasn’t so much as you could put in the palm of me ‘and!”

The only ones who are quiet are the ragged children. They stand as close up to the musicians as they can get, their hands behind their backs, their eyes big. Occasionally a leg hops, an arm wags. A tiny staggerer, overcome, turns round twice, sits down solemn, and then gets up again.

“Ain’t it lovely?” whispers a small girl behind her hand.

And the music breaks into bright pieces, and joins together again, and again breaks, and is dissolved, and the crowd scatters, moving slowly up the hill.

At the corner of the road the stalls begin.

“Ticklers! Tuppence a tickler! ‘Ool ‘ave a tickler? Tickle ‘em up, boys.” Little soft brooms on wire handles. They are eagerly bought by the soldiers.

Bank Holiday

"Buy a golliwog! Tuppence a golliwog!"

"Buy a jumping donkey! All alive-o!"

"Superior chewing gum. Buy something to do, boys."

"Buy a rose. Give 'er a rose, boy. Roses, lady?"

"Fevvers! Fevvers!" They are hard to resist. Lovely, streaming feathers, emerald green, scarlet, bright blue, canary yellow. Even the babies wear feathers threaded through their bonnets.

And an old woman in a three-cornered paper hat cries as if it were her final parting advice, the only way of saving yourself or of bringing him to his senses: "Buy a three-cornered 'at, my dear, an' put it on!"

It is a flying day, half sun, half wind. When the sun goes in a shadow flies over; when it comes out again it is fiery. The men and women feel it burning their backs, their breasts, and their arms; they feel their bodies expanding, coming alive . . . so that they make large embracing gestures, lift up their arms, for nothing, swoop down on a girl, blurt into laughter.

Lemonade! A whole tank of it stands on a table covered with a cloth; and lemons like blunted fishes blob in the yellow water. It looks solid, like a jelly, in the thick glasses. Why can't they drink it without spilling it? Everybody spills it, and before the glass is handed back the last drops are thrown in a ring.

Round the ice-cream cart, with its striped awning and bright brass cover, the children cluster. Little tongues lick, lick round the cream trumpets, round the squares. The cover is lifted,

Katherine Mansfield

the wooden spoon plunges in ; one shuts one's eyes to feel it, silently scrunching.

"Let these little birds tell you your future!" She stands beside the cage, a shrivelled ageless Italian, clasping and unclasping her dark claws. Her face, a treasure of delicate carving, is tied in a green-and-gold scarf. And inside their prison the love-birds flutter towards the papers in the seed-tray.

"You have great strength of character. You will marry a red-haired man and have three children. Beware of a blonde woman. Look out! Look out! A motor-car driven by a fat chauffeur comes rushing down the hill. Inside there a blonde woman, pouting, leaning forward—rushing through your life—beware! beware!"

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am an auctioneer by profession, and if what I tell you is not the truth I am liable to have my licence taken away from me and a heavy imprisonment." He holds the licence across his chest; the sweat pours down his face into his paper collar; his eyes look glazed. When he takes off his hat there is a deep pucker of angry flesh on his forehead. Nobody buys a watch.

Look out again! A huge barouche comes swinging down the hill, with two old, old babies inside. She holds up a lace parasol; he sucks the knob of his cane, and the fat old bodies roll together as the cradle rocks, and the steaming horse leaves a trail of manure as it ambles down the hill.

Under a tree, Professor Leonard, in cap and gown, stands beside his banner. He is here "for one day," from the London, Paris, and Brussels

Bank Holiday

Exhibition, to tell your fortune from your face And he stands, smiling encouragement, like a clumsy dentist. When the big men, romping and swearing a moment before, hand across their sixpence, and stand before him, they are suddenly serious, dumb, timid, almost blushing as the Professor's quick hand notches the printed card. They are like little children caught playing in a forbidden garden by the owner, stepping from behind a tree.

The top of the hill is reached. How hot it is ! How fine it is ! The public-house is open, and the crowd presses in. The mother sits on the pavement edge with her baby, and the father brings her out a glass of dark, brownish stuff, and then savagely elbows his way in again. A reek of beer floats from the public-house, and a loud clatter and rattle of voices.

The wind has dropped, and the sun burns more fiercely than ever. Outside the two swing-doors there is a thick mass of children like flies at the mouth of a sweet-jar.

And up, up the hill come the people, with ticklers and golliwogs, and roses and feathers. Up, up they thrust into the light and heat, shouting, laughing, squealing, as though they were being pushed by something far below, and by the sun, far ahead of them—drawn up into the full, bright, dazzling radiance to . . . what ?

The suggestions for discussion and composition have been made fairly numerous and of varying difficulty in order to provide a choice. It is not intended that every class should plough conscientiously through every exercise! Some of the questions may be profitably discussed in class, to collect ideas and determine a line of attack before they are answered in writing.

The sections on the authors and their work are also intended to provide material for discussion and amplification.

ON THINKING IT OVER

J. M. ALLISON : MR. FRANKLYN'S
ADVENTURE

THE British Museum Library catalogue, that recording angel of English publications, credits Mr. Allison with five books—the collection of short stories, *It Never Rains*, from which “Mr. Franklyn’s Adventure” is taken, *First and Second Essays on Advertising*, and two slim volumes of verse. All of them are individual and interesting. The essays show the writer strong and lucid in argument or exposition; the poems reveal the lover of bird-life and the open air, who looks back longingly upon “careless droving days” in Australia, but finds contentment in his “low, long room in Sussex”:

Within, the old
And ample hearth aglow with leaping flame,
The polished oak reflecting candle light,
A copied Raeburn smiling from her frame,
The curtains drawn against the wintry night,
A little wine, an ancient pipe, a book,
A friend, a gossip on the day’s events,
A puppy curled within the inglenook.
All these, and such as these, are my contents.

The short stories, however, are Mr. Allison’s most characteristic work, and the best of them are very good indeed—deft, confident, and skilfully wrought,

* From *Old Man’s Milk*, The Poetry Bookshop, 1925.

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tempering wit and satire with humour. "Mr. Franklyn's Adventure" is not the only story in the volume which is almost faultlessly told.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Say briefly what you think of Mr. Franklyn—remembering that he must have some good points too!
2. Do you agree that this story is faultlessly told, or do you think there are lapses? Is it mock-heroic?
3. Find the reference which gives approximately the year in which Mr. Franklyn is supposed to tell his story.

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

4. Show how the author has used the setting to heighten the effect of the story
5. Write briefly the account of Mr. Franklyn and his adventure which the admiral gave at his club; and a letter from Mr. Franklyn to his friend in Leeds, describing how he told his story.
6. Tell the story briefly in your own words. What has it lost?

FURTHER READING

7. *It Never Rains*, by J. M. Allison (Hurst and Blackett).

G. K. CHESTERTON: THE SONG OF THE FLYING FISH

There were good detective stories long before Sherlock Holmes made his first bow—those by Edgar Allan Poe and Wilkie Collins, at least, are much too good to be forgotten—but it was certainly Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who gave this type of story its great vogue. The fictional death-rate among millionaires

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is now so high that a close season has been suggested, and the detective story so universally popular that it demands representation in such a volume as this.

Mr. Chesterton was prince of twentieth century writers of detective fiction. Many others were as clever, but no one else added to cleverness such wit and exuberance and versatility. As journalist, essayist, novelist, poet, playwright and historian he was one of the outstanding men of letters of our time. His passion for paradoxes was sometimes as fatal as Shakespeare's love of puns; he had the journalist's habit of seeing the daily molehill as an enduring mountain, and sometimes we tire of his prejudices and jollifications—but not for long. He was sane and sincere, whatever his mannerisms, and his Falstaffian wit and humour, as well as his girth, could not be ignored. The story of his giving up his seat in a tramcar to two ladies may be apocryphal, but it ought to have been true.

FOR DISCUSSION

8. Is there any weak point in the story, or anything left unexplained?

9. Suggest trains of thought by which Mr. Smart could lead up to the subject of his goldfish when talking to a professional cricketer, a politician, and a popular novelist.

10. What is "the exact outline of a huge image of Buddha"? Who was Buddha?

11. Mr. Chesterton was fond of paradoxes. Are there any in this story?

12. Are there any indications of the author's religious views?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

13. Did the author lead you to expect a supernatural explanation of the mystery? If so, how did he do it? And is it merely a trick to lead the reader astray or a natural presentation of the case from the point of view of the people concerned? Did you discover the true

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explanation before Father Brown gave it, and if so, how?

14. In the introduction to *The Secret of Father Brown*, from which this story is taken, an American asks the priest to explain the "secret method" by which he had solved a number of murder mysteries in the United States. Father Brown explains: "You see it was I who killed all those people. . . I had planned out each of the crimes very carefully. I had thought out exactly how a thing like that could be done, and in what style or state of mind a man could really do it. And when I was quite sure that I felt exactly like the murderer myself, of course I knew who he was."

Construct the train of thought by which Father Brown solved the mystery of the Flying Fish.

15. Write short accounts of the theft, with sets of headlines, one for the *Times* or *Daily Telegraph*, the other for the *Daily Mail* or *News-Chronicle*.

16. Give a detailed account of Inspector Pinner's visit, in dialogue as far as possible.

17. Write a sequel in which the informal club meets to talk over the theft, and the Count de Lara is persuaded to tell at length the story of the "ancient Hindu hermit" whom he mentioned.

18. Try to explain why detective stories are so popular at present; or write "A Defence of Detective Stories," and then compare your essay with that under the same title which appears in *The Defendant*, by G. K. Chesterton.

19. Read one of the Father Brown volumes and then compare Mr. Chesterton with Conan Doyle or Edgar Allan Poe as a writer of detective stories; or compare Father Brown with Sherlock Holmes or any other detective of fiction whom you know well.

FURTHER READING

20. *The Father Brown Stories*, by G. K. Chesterton. This is an "omnibus" incorporating the previous volumes: *The Wisdom*, *The Innocence*, *The Incredulity*, and *The Secret of Father Brown* (Cassell and Co.).

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NAOMI MITCHISON : THE Highbrow

Mrs. Mitchison, who is Professor John Scott Haldane's daughter and Mr. J. B. S. Haldane's sister, has won a place of honour among the few good historical novelists of our time. For her the past is neither a fancy-dress party, picturesquely arranged for our amusement, nor decorative material for disguising hackneyed plots and feebly drawn characters. The past really exists for Mrs. Mitchison. She has lived in ancient Greece, witnessed the crumbling of the Roman power and wandered across Europe, centuries ago, from Byzantium to Britain; she has learned to know the people of those dead times as living men and women, like and unlike ourselves, whose lives were slowly changed or suddenly shattered, as ours are, by the march of great events. So the stories she tells are less the product of knowledge acquired from books than a traveller's tales of things seen and heard, and retold with the impartiality of the artist, whose function it is to understand and recreate rather than to praise and blame. Judgment by modern standards, if it is to be passed at all, she leaves to the reader.

In her less successful stories Mrs. Mitchison's very intensity of realization sometimes betrays her, giving her creations the hard, incredible solidity of the stereoscope or a baffling queerness; and occasionally, when the imaginative writer nods, the historian takes insistent charge for a time; but more often her quick sense of the beauty of words and her gift for seeing history through the eyes of her characters enables her to make the past live again in her pages.

On Thinking It Over

FOR DISCUSSION

21. Where was Gela? (The story gives you the answer to this question.) And what had lately happened at Syracuse? Why was it that to Xenaides, "after Syracuse, Dorians weren't a laughing matter"?

22. Why did Xenaides injure Delphion?

23. Was Timanthes uneasy when Xenaides was being punished? If so, why?

24. "There, but for the grace of God . . ." said John Howard. How does the saying end, and why does the author quote it here? Is it an anachronism?

25. Is the title a good one? And what makes a good title?

26. In what sense is this story historical?

27. "I like history; I like watching it. It is like a bunch of grapes swinging round in the sun, and sometimes the light catches one grape and sometimes another. All I have done is to try and catch the light where it struck some special place and hold it there, and hope not to rub too much of the bloom off the grape. In a way that is all that really good historians do, only they catch more of the grapes and see them clearer. But no one can do much more. Flecker wrote once:

'Since man's endeavour flows as a river, how shall it turn to the hills again?

Burst again all rosy with morning from snow-starred mountains of first renown;

Who to-day shall hear the Achæans shout from the trench of the Trojans slain,

Who rebuild in music or memory Sparta's tower or Athena's town?'

"The grape that we can hold and taste is the present, and well may we do it! But the odd thing is that though we can get hold of it all real and solid, yet we can never stand back and see it plain."—Naomi Mitchison.

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

28. Has Mrs. Mitchison written in slabs of history by way of explanation, or woven the necessary details into

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the story as it progresses? What have you learned about the recent historical events? Is the writer interested chiefly in these events or in the working out of their effects in the lives of individuals?

29 Timanthes, Xenaites, and Euphron each lacked something, some strength or grace of character. What was it in each case, and how did it affect the events of the story?

30. Who hated Xenaites most, and why?

31. Tell the story as Delphion would tell it.

32. Explain why Xenaites struck Euphron.

33. Choose speakers from the class to represent Euphron and Xenaites, and let each say what he thinks of the other and defend himself as well as he can. You might admit Timanthes and Delphion to the discussion.

34 Write a conversation between Euphron and Xenaites. Euphron, let us say, steps out of Charon's boat upon the farther shore of Styx, gives the old ferryman his obolus, and turns—to find Xenaites awaiting him. . . .

FURTHER READING

35. *The Hostages*, by Naomi Mitchison (Jonathan Cape).

A. E. COPPARD: WILLIE WAUGH

Mr. Coppard's first volume of short stories, *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me*, was issued in 1921 by the Golden Cockerel Press—one of the most distinguished of the "private" presses—and nine years later the same Press published for him *My Hundredth Story*. So it is clear enough that, in an age when many authors wrote too much, Mr. Coppard's work did not suffer from hasty production, but the dozen volumes of stories and poems which he published in those nine years have amply distinguished him as a writer of rare accomplishment and a master of the short story. He wrote several tales and fables of pure

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fantasy ; tales, realistic or fantastic, in an Irish dialect which is a little reminiscent of J. M. Synge ; and stories and sketches of English life.

It is this last group which contains his best work. Most of the characters and scenes belong to the country-side, all of them are commonplace enough, but his angle of vision, as convincing as it is unexpected, reveals them in a new light. The melancholy amusement and mild derision with which he regards life never destroy his human insight. Like Katherine Mansfield, he is more interested in his characters themselves than in what they do, and his sensitive craftsmanship has this point at least in common with hers, that it enables him in a few lines to give life to a character or a scene.

FOR DISCUSSION

36. Find phrases which show the author's power of exact observation and description of detail.

37. Are there any touches of pathos or tragedy in this story ?

38. " Ah, the Peter ! " Explain the reference.

39. Why does Willie Waugh speak gruffly when he says, " Well, take the blame saw " ? Why does he say, " And they be all alike " ?

40. What difference would it make to the story if the descriptive passage were omitted from the last paragraph but one ?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

41. Why does Willie change his mind about lending the saw ?

42. Invent and describe briefly two or three more pranks which the boys played together.

43. Describe Willie Waugh's character and appearance. (Before this is attempted some word-portraits might be read and discussed, e.g. Dickens's picture of Lord George Gordon and his secretary in *Barnaby*

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Rudge, which is an excellent model because of its skilful interweaving of description and characterization, and its almost dramatic power.)

MARY WEBB: OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

Gladys Mary Meredith was born in the little Shropshire hamlet of Leighton, under the Wrekin, on March 25, 1881. She had in her that intermingling of racial strains which sometimes makes talent of the highest order, for her father, who fostered her love of nature, folklore, and history, was of Welsh descent, while her mother was an Edinburgh woman, of the clan of Sir Walter Scott. And she spent her first thirty-one years in Shropshire towns and villages, her shy, poetic spirit nourished by the rich beauties of that country-side, and her generous selflessness opening to her the hearts of the Border people, in whom Celt and Saxon meet and strange old beliefs and turns of thought still linger. Her favourite books were the Bible, Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy's novels, Synge's plays, and Theodor Storm's short stories, and she studied the mediæval mystics and many other writers; yet neither extensive reading nor ten years of ill-health could keep her from living much of her life in the open air.

In 1912 she married Mr. H. B. L. Webb, a Shropshire man, and, like her father, a Cambridge graduate and a schoolmaster. For two years they lived in Weston-super-Mare, and they spent some time in Chester and London, but Shropshire was her only home. The misery and ugliness which mar so much of London nearly broke her heart, and in her Hampstead house or in literary gatherings she never found such happiness as in her Shropshire cottage, where

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she could work hard in the garden and sell the produce at her own stall in Shrewsbury market, give lavishly to every beggar, bring happiness to children and poor folk, and range the country-side at will.

She had written essays before her marriage, and a volume of these, *The Spring of Joy*, was published in 1917. She turned now to poems and to novels of Shropshire life, in which she could express all her passionate perception of nature and of human character, her vision of their spiritual significances, and her intimate knowledge of the people and the country she had loved so long. For months she would be quiet, abstracted, brooding over a theme, dwelling with her characters and realizing all the circumstances of their lives; then suddenly she would begin to write, her imagination in ferment, her whole energy of mind and spirit poured out until the novel was finished and her strength exhausted. She lived everything that she wrote, and always the human story was worked out as a part of the changing pageant of nature, against a background of woodland and meadow, mountain and tarn, exact in finest detail, yet vivid and significant and alive. She knew, as all mystics know, man's immortal kinship with every form of life, from the lowliest to the highest. "The echoes are in us of great voices long gone hence; the unknown cries of huge beasts on the mountains, the sullen aims of creatures in the slime; the love-call of the bittern. We know, too, echoes of things outside our ken—the thought that shapes itself in the bees' brain and becomes a waxen-box of sweets; the tyranny of youth stirring in the womb; the crazy terror of small slaughtered beasts; the upward push of folded grass, and how the leaf feels in all its veins the cold rain; the ceremonial that passes yearly in the emerald temples of bud and calyx—we have walked those temples; we are the sacrifice on those altars." So she wrote, in *Gone to Earth*, of that light of the

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imagination by which her exact knowledge became creative power—for it is only imagination which can make knowledge live.

Her first novel, *The Golden Arrow*, was published in 1916, and followed by *Gone to Earth* (1917), *The House in Dormer Forest* (1920), *Seven for a Secret* (1922), and *Precious Bane* (1924). The rare beauty of her work was recognized by discerning reviewers and readers; *Precious Bane* was awarded the Femina Vie Heureuse Prize; but she won no great popular favour, and her death at St. Leonards, on October 8, 1927, attracted little notice.

A few days after her death the Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, speaking at a dinner of the Royal Literary Fund, paid a high tribute to *Precious Bane*. Newspapers reported the speech, and almost immediately *Precious Bane* became a "best-seller." In a few weeks all Mary Webb's novels were in great demand, and the appearance of her collected works in seven volumes (1928-29) confirmed her ironically belated popularity.

Mary Webb's "true form of expression was the more leisurely form of the novel," says Mr. Martin Armstrong, in his introduction to her posthumous volume of short stories, *Armour wherein he Trusted* (1929). "The short story was with her a matter of secondary importance. . . . Her novels weld into coherent artistic form a central experience and a mass of appropriate poetic detail which she has slowly gathered and heaped about it. But the short story is the exact opposite of this: it is the distilling of a significant moment or fact from a large mass of experience; it is a simplification and a selection, and it requires a considerable technical awareness in the writer. But Mary Webb's technique was intuitive rather than conscious: that is why, on the occasions when she wished to give artistic expression to a brief and simple emotion, she turned more often and more

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successfully to poetry, and that is why her stories seldom, if ever, reach the level of her novels and poems. Yet the best come very near to them, and the best are, 'Over the Hills and Far Away,' 'The Bread House,' and 'The Prize.'"

FOR DISCUSSION

44. What do you like about this story and the writer's style?

45. Is the story melodramatic, happy, pathetic, sentimental, realistic, poetic . . . ? Where does the climax come?

46. Why did the farmer choose Margaret for his wife?

47. Do you feel that this story is "the distilling of a significant moment of fact from a large mass of experience"? Does it illustrate what the editor has said above about Mary Webb's use of nature as a living background?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

48. Make a clear picture in your mind of the barn at Thresholds with Margaret at work in it, mending a chair, and then write down as clearly as you can what you have seen, trying to keep the mood in which the story opens. You must re-read the story very carefully first, with your imagination wide awake.

49. If you know any country dialect, write what the girl said to the other servants as soon as she saw them. This should be in Shropshire speech, but if necessary you may assume that she is a "foreigner" from your own county.

50. Write a short story with a farmhouse setting.

FURTHER READING

51. *Precious Bane*, and *Poems*, by Mary Webb (Jonathan Cape, 5s.), *Mary Webb: a Short Study of her Life and Work*, by Hilda Addison (Cecil Palmer, 5s.).

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JOHN RUSSELL: THE LOST GOD

Every one enjoys a forthright story of adventure, and whether the hero is being hunted across London by a gang of "crooks," or is hunting pterodactyls among the upper reaches of the Amazon, the reader is satisfied so long as the tale "hangs together" well and there is plenty of excitement. Plot and incident are almost everything, no subtleties of characterization and atmosphere are needed, the style must be good, but simple and direct; and the author usually leaves untouched these deeper problems which make the mystery of life. An adventure story must be above everything "a good yarn."

Mr. John Russell's stories are very good yarns, and sometimes something more by virtue of their vivid, heightened pictures of life on the other side of the globe. He has published four volumes of short stories. The first, from which "The Lost God" is taken, appeared in 1921, with the title *Where the Pavement Ends*, and secured the author's popularity at once, for his stories are always vigorous and exciting, and are often set in the East Indies or Papua or Polynesia, where the Stone Age clashes with the twentieth century, the East with the West, and the wildest adventures seem possible.

FOR DISCUSSION

52. The writer might have begun with the capture of the *Timothy S*, and then gone on to the arrival of the rescue party. Has he chosen a better way of telling the story? If so, how is it better?

53. Find on a large map the places mentioned in the story.

54. For what purpose is Jeckol introduced?

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55. "The flippancy of emotion." Comment on this
56. Choose passages which show the author's skill in creating suspense and dramatic interest.
57. What shows most clearly that Albro was a brave man?
58. What impression of Papua has this story given you?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

59. Describe Albro's character and appearance. Try to make it a living picture. You might assume that you are in the Far East, that you have heard much talk of him, and that when you see him at last you study him with eager interest, realizing gradually that of such a man all the stories you have heard may be true. You might begin, "He was leaning over the port rail when I saw him first . . ."
60. Write a short account of the capture of the *Timothy S.*, making it as exciting as you can and using the outline suggested by Peters. When you have finished your story find a good title for it.
61. Write a sequel to "The Lost God," dealing with Albro's adventures after he emerged from the diving dress.
62. Compare "The Lost God" with "Jimmy Goggles the God," by H. G. Wells
63. When a writer has an idea for a story of this kind he has to think it out step by step, inventing incidents, characters, setting, etc. Can you suggest the idea with which "The Lost God" began, and the train of thought by which it may have been worked out?
64. One critic hailed Mr. Russell as "a new Kipling." What suggested the comparison? Do you agree?

FURTHER READING

- 65 *Where the Pavement Ends*, by John Russell (Thornton Butterworth).

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H. M. TOMLINSON : THE EXTRA HAND

That ancient belief which gave words a magical power revives in the reader's mind as Mr. Tomlinson begins to weave his spell, for his are the traveller's tales which conquer time and space, and bear us off with the traveller into the jungles of the Amazon or the seas and islands of the East. Mr. Tomlinson is a recognized novelist now, by virtue of *Galleons Reach* and *All our Yesterdays*, and these novels contain some of his finest work; but many of his admirers do not think of him as a novelist. He is the man who learned the magic of ships and the sea in his Poplar boyhood, remembered them through his days as shipping clerk, journalist, literary editor, and war correspondent, and turned to them again to heal a war-weary mind. His first book, indeed, appeared in 1912, when he was thirty-nine: "The Sea and the Jungle, being the narrative of the voyage of the tramp steamer *Capella* from Swansea to Para in the Brazils, and thence 2,000 miles along the forests of the Amazon and Madeira Rivers to the San Antonio Falls; afterwards returning to Barbados for orders, and going by way of Jamaica to Tampa in Florida, where she loaded for home.—Done in the years 1909, and 1910." But all his other books have appeared since the war—*Old Junk* (1918), from which "The Extra Hand" is taken, and half a dozen other volumes of travel sketches and essays.

Mr. Tomlinson is a master of English prose, yet much more than a stylist, because he is an artist; his craftsmanship subserves his imagination, so that we share with him, as though in the flesh, his adventures by sea and land, and feel the lash of tropical rain, the intolerable burden of jungle heat, as vividly as we see

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the beauty of a moving ship or an exotic butterfly. And because he is a traveller sensitive and aware, all that he shows us has meaning as well as reality.

FOR DISCUSSION

66. "Of course she was haunted," says Mr. Tomlinson. Why "of course"? (See page 111 for the context.)

67. Do you think that this is a true story?

68. What have you learned from the story about the writer and about seamen's beliefs?

69. Has the writer relied mainly upon plot, characterization, atmosphere, or incident?

70. Re-read as attentively as you would a lyric poem the first three paragraphs, so that the picture takes shape in your mind and you grow into the mood of the "entranced silver evening." Then say what you think of the passage.

71. Read "The Ship that found herself," by Rudyard Kipling. What has that story in common with this?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

72. "She was more mine than Yeo's," says Mr. Tomlinson. Explain his meaning.

73. Write a short story of the sea, making George Galsworthy the story-teller and choosing an appropriate setting.

74. Write a short sketch with one of the following titles: The Derelict, Ebb Tide, After the Storm, Tea Clippers, The Fighting Téméraire, Becalmed, Signals of Distress.

FURTHER READING

75. *Old Junk, Tide Marks*, and *The Sea and the Jungle*, by H. M. Tomlinson.

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STACY AUMONIER: A MAN OF LETTERS

Like many another English writer, Stacy Aumonier graduated into literature almost by accident. Born at Cranleigh in 1887, the son of a sculptor, he became first a decorative designer and landscape painter, exhibiting frequently at the Royal Academy and Royal Institute, and then a society entertainer. He began writing in 1913, and when he died in 1928 he had published six volumes of short stories, besides other stories contributed to magazines, and five novels.

Almost from the first he showed himself a master of the story-teller's craft; he unfolds his tale with such skill that the reader must go on, full of eagerness, to see what comes next. He is never slow or dull or trivial, but always entertaining and often more; for though concerned first of all to hold the reader's attention he is an artist too, deeply in love with life, humorous and shrewdly observant, full of interest in men and women. His style is simple, unpretentious, but always economical and adequate. The collection of his best short stories which appeared in 1929, with the title *Ups and Downs*, and a generous Foreword by John Galsworthy, contains over six hundred pages of very good reading.

FOR DISCUSSION

76. Comment on the title.
77. Why did Codling want to join the literary society, and why did he object so much to "talk, talk, talk"?
78. What have you noticed about the style of the various letters, and about Baldwin's last signature?
79. For what purpose is Walter Bunning introduced?
80. Which of the characters do you like most and least?

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FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

81. What are the advantages and disadvantages of telling a story in a series of letters? Do you know any stories or novels in this form?

82. What effect had the war and the silence of the desert on Codling?

83. Compare Codling with Baldwin. Which is the more intelligent?

84. Describe briefly the character and appearance of Annie, Baldwin, and Weekes.

85. Write a letter from Annie to Weekes thanking him for the £50; or from Childers to Weekes saying what he thinks of the whole affair.

86. Tell the story simply and briefly in your own words.

FURTHER READING

87 *Ups and Downs*, by Stacy Aumonier (Heinemann).

LORD DUNSANY: A DAUGHTER OF RAMESES

It has been said that all poetry is inspired by homesickness, that just as an Englishman exiled in a desolate country longs for the beauty of England so the poet longs for the ideal world of his imagination, which seems to him man's rightful home, because he is more sensitive than most of us to joy and beauty, and therefore more sensitive to ugliness and pain. Even those poets who seek "to see life steadily and see it whole" measure it by the standards of their ideal; and there are many who seek chiefly an escape from reality into realms of fantasy and romance.

Lord Dunsany is one of these poets, though nearly all his work is in prose. His fables and satirical tales show his deep-rooted impatience of many things in

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modern life; his plays, novels, and short stories bear his reader away into strange countries of romance, where his poetic imagination holds absolute sway. These countries he calls sometimes Egypt or "Babylon about the time of the decadence," but they all lie upon the frontiers of Elfland and march with "Teroora and hilly Chang and the Dukedoms of Molóng and Mlash." They are peopled by adventurous mortals—kings, beggars, poets, and pirate captains—by Gibbelins and Gnoles, by the Sphinx and the hippogryph and such monsters of faerie, and by strange gods and goddesses unknown to any other mythology. Their names alone would give them life, so remarkable is their creator's gift for the invention of names, musical or grotesque, which are full of imaginative suggestion, and their adventures are related in a rich elaborate prose, derived from the Bible. Lord Dunsany's least successful stories are finely wrought tapestries of words marred by overmuch self-consciousness, his best work, inspired by imaginative sincerity, has the high beauty of romance.

FOR DISCUSSION

88. Re-read this story more than once, as you would a poem, and when you appreciate it as a whole and in detail, choose the passages which appeal to you most strongly for their beauty and effectiveness.

89. What do "Abdul" and "Eblis" mean? Who was Tutankh-Amen?

90. Are there any satirical touches in the story?

91. Study the way in which the author plans the setting and creates the atmosphere for the appearance of the Princess. What effect is he aiming at? Does he succeed?

92. In what way is the Princess's outlook extraordinary?

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FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

93 Characteristics of Lord Dunsany's work as a whole are the economy of means by which he secures desired effects, the use made of fictitious names; the introduction of realism into romantic situations, and the rhythm of his prose. Do these characteristics appear in "A Daughter of Rameses"?

94 Say briefly what Alfred Codling would think of this story.

95 Suggest another way in which the mystery of the coffin might be explained.

96 You have met Abdul Eblis in Egypt and persuaded him to call back from the dead some one whose story you wish to hear. Write an account of what happened.

FURTHER READING

97. *The Travel Tales of Mr. Joseph Jorkens, Fifty-One Tales*, and *The King of Elfland's Daughter*, by Lord Dunsany.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD: BANK HOLIDAY

Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp, who will always be known by her pen-name, Katherine Mansfield, was born on October 14, 1888, in Wellington, New Zealand, educated at Queen's College, London, and died at Fontainebleau, near Paris, on January 9, 1923.

Much of her work appeared in the *Athenæum* and other periodicals edited by her husband, Mr. Middleton Murry, the critic, for recognition came to her slowly, and some of her best stories were refused by every editor to whom they were submitted. Before her death, however, she had published four volumes of short stories, *In a German Pension* (1911), *Bliss* (1920), *The Garden Party* (1922) from which "Bank Holiday" is taken, and *The Dove's Nest* (1923), and

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had become known as one of the most sensitive and accomplished artists who have ever chosen this medium of expression.

Something Childish, and other Stories (1924), the *Journal, Letters, Poems*, and a volume of criticism called *Novels and Novelists*, have not only confirmed her reputation, they have heightened for a multitude of readers a sense of fellowship with the writer which is akin to personal friendship, so intense and so pure is Katherine Mansfield's communication of her own vision and experience of life. This is the distinctive charm of all her writings. "Katherine Mansfield responded more completely to life than any writer I have known," says Mr. Murry, "and the effect of that more complete response is in her work."

"Her affinities," he continues, "are rather with the English poets than the English prose-writers. There is no English prose-writer* to whom she can be related. The revolution which she made in the art of short story in England was altogether personal. Many writers have attempted to carry on her work; not one has come within a measurable distance of success. Her secret died with her. . . . It is noticeable, however, that the most whole-hearted admiration her work has received comes pre-eminently from the most distinguished short-story writers we have in England . . . [who] with one voice salute her as *hors concours*, though they find it as difficult as any critic to say wherein her superiority consists. And perhaps a more remarkable fact is that her stories have met with an unusual popular success. . . . It may be that the most

* There is a certain resemblance between Katherine Mansfield's stories and those of Anton Tchekov. But this resemblance is often exaggerated by critics, who seem to believe that Katherine Mansfield learned her art from Tchekov. This is a singularly superficial view of the relation, which was one of kindred temperaments. . . . Her method was wholly her own, and her development would have been precisely the same had Tchekov never existed.—J. M. M.

On Thinking It Over

adequate judgment upon her writing is that of the printer whom I have quoted: 'But these kids are *real*'

"Katherine Mansfield was natural and spontaneous as was no other human being I have ever met. She seemed to adjust herself to life as a flower adjusts itself to the earth and to the sun. She suffered greatly, she delighted greatly; but her suffering and delight were never partial, they filled the whole of her. She was utterly generous, utterly courageous; when she gave herself to life, to love, to some spirit of truth which she served, she gave royally. She loved life—with all its beauty and its pain; she accepted life completely, and she had the right to accept it, for she had endured in herself all the suffering which life can lavish upon a single soul."

Her method was to strip away everything unessential, so that only the most significant details remained; her aim was to discover truth and render it faithfully. The *Journal* intimately reveals the woman for whom living and writing were one art, and who struggled constantly to be humble in her work, to avoid cleverness and self-consciousness, "and especially to keep in touch with Life—with the sky and this moon, these stars, these cold, candid peaks."

FOR DISCUSSION

98. Is this a story in the usual sense of the term? If not, what is the difference?

99. What is the writer's attitude to the scene and the crowd? Is she, for instance, amused, contemptuous, impatient, sympathetic, "superior," or satirical? What is the final impression left on the reader?

100. There is one reference which dates the story approximately. What is it?

101. If the last paragraph were omitted what difference would it make? Would the story lose?

102. Choose three or four short phrases which show

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clearly Katherine Mansfield's power of vivid description in few words

103. Are there any stories in this book which resemble "Bank Holiday" in any way?

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

104. Mr. John Galsworthy said that Katherine Mansfield "could reach and bring before us the in-between spaces and things and thoughts." Mr. S. P. B. Mais said that she "seems to paint for the sake of painting, for the beauty of the scene, and the combined effect suddenly shakes you. You have seen something far behind." Are these criticisms true of "Bank Holiday"?

105. Write a similar description of any scene which you know well, such as a railway station just before the departure of a train, or a seaside promenade on a hot day in August.

106. Read more of Katherine Mansfield's work and then say what kind of "revolution she made in the art of short story in England."

107. What was Katherine Mansfield's aim as a short story writer?

FURTHER READING

108. *The Garden Party* and *The Doves' Nest*, by Katherine Mansfield. *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by John Middleton Murry (Constable).

GENERAL

FOR DISCUSSION OR COMPOSITION

109. Which of the stories depend mainly upon (a) plot, (b) characterization, (c) atmosphere? Which are suitable and which unsuitable for telling by word of mouth?

110. Which character in the book interests you most, and why?

111. Name any characters who seem to you fully alive

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and any who do not quite come to life, and write a paragraph about one of them

112. Describe any amusing or exciting incident in the book.

113. Which stories begin at the beginning and which begin in the middle of things? Which grips your attention most quickly, which opens most slowly, and which has the most effective ending?

114. Which story has the most cleverly constructed plot?

115. Which stories (if any) would you describe as (1) humorous, (2) tragic, (3) pathetic, (4) romantic, (5) realistic, (6) fantastic, (7) melodramatic, (8) farcical, (9) historical?—The same story may appear under more than one heading

116. Choose from the book three or four passages which seem to you particularly well written.

117. Compare any story in this book with any other short story you know.

118. A friend of yours who has not read this book has asked you which of the stories you like best. Write a letter to him, answering his question, outlining the story, and saying what you think of it. Are the characters alive and interesting? Is the story well put together? What do you notice about the style, the way in which it is written? What are its particular good qualities and defects? And so on

119. Write a dialogue between Alfred Codling and Abdul Eblis; or James O'Shaughnessy Albro and Mr. Franklyn; or Willie Waugh and George Galsworthy; or Abdul Eblis and Father Brown; or Xenaides and Albro. Talk this over in class before you begin writing. Arrange the speeches as in a play.

120. What short stories have you read which you remember with pleasure?

121. Make a list of authors who have written good short stories. They need not all be English

122. Who wrote the following stories and volumes of stories?—The Day's Work, Island Nights' Entertainments, The Garden Party, The Country of the Blind, Youth, Tales of Mystery and Imagination, The Luck of Roaring Camp, The Ghost Ship, Fifty-one Tales, Puck of Pook's Hill, The Connoisseur, Black Sparta, The

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Dove's Nest, The Red-headed League, Life's Handicap, Fishmonger's Fiddle, Thrawn Janet, Ghost Stories of an Antiquary, Caravan, The Inn of the Two Witches, The Bottle Imp, The Little Man, The Hostages, His Last Bow, Tidemarks, Where the Pavement Ends, The Stolen Bacillus, Mrs. Adis, The Sin-Eater, Rip Van Winkle, A Christmas Carol, Wandering Willie's Tale, Seven Poor Travellers, Can Such Things Be?, The Fall of the House of Usher, The Man who would be King, The Trimmed Lamp, The Two Drovers, The Jumping Frog, The Cop and the Anthem, The Wallet of Kai Lung, The Apparition of one Mrs. Veal, Malachi's Cove, The Sexton's Hero, The Great Carbuncle, The Three Strangers

Here are some passages for comparison and discussion :

123. "A novel is, or should be, a development of plot, character or atmosphere, or, in the case of great art, of all three ; but a short story is seldom development, and nearly always culmination. It is always a dramatic, an emotional highlight, a cumulative, a concentric moment, which may suggest but never state the dragging progression which led up to it. It may be, indeed, a series of such moments, as when the bud bursts into the blossom and the blossom into the full flower. It is at such moments that the reader of the short story bursts in upon his garden, but the novel reader watches its slow development and growing from the seed to the flower."—John Cournos, *The Best Short Stories of 1924*. I. English

124. "It is always disturbing to me when things fall into pattern form, when, in fact, incidents of real life dovetail with each other in such a manner as to suggest the shape of a story. A story is a nice, neat little thing with what is called a 'working up' and a climax, and life is a clumsy, ungraspable thing, very incomplete in its periods, and with a poor sense of climax."—Stacy Aumonier, *Them Others*.

125. "I am apt to find exciting suggestions in the development of my characters, and my natural tendency is to press these and let the story go hang."—J. D. Beresford, *The Meeting Place and other Stories*.

126. "A short-story writer is always beset by the temptation to be inventive rather than creative or even

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recreative"—John Galsworthy, Foreword to *Ups and Downs*.

127. "Finished 'An Ideal Family' yesterday. It seems to me better than 'The Doves,' but still it is not good enough. I worked at it hard enough, God knows, and yet I did not get the deepest truth out of the idea, even once."—Katherine Mansfield, in her private *Journal*.

128. "The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will, but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this? . . . We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it."—Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*.

THE END

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